AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SHAH-NAMEH OF FIRDOUSI

FROM

THE FRENCH OF JULES MOHL.

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J. D. KHANDALWALA,

Veerkshetra Mudralaya. BBRAS

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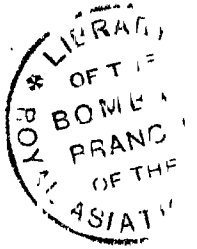
BY

66075

JAMSHEDJI DORABJI KHANDALWALA.
Acting Third Judge, Varishtha Court.
H. H. The Gaekwar's Service.



"Basi ranj burdam bad in sâle si"
"Ajam zindhe kardam ba din Pârsi"
"Jehandâr agar nisti tang dast"
"Mará bar sárè gah budi nishast."

Pxa-C-6

Shah-nameh. Preface II.

I have laboured hard these thirty years. I have revived Persia with the Persian faith. If my king had been generous, he would have given me a place on the throne by his side.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

In the good old days when scholarship, both Persian and English, was rare, the book of Ferdousi used to be read and listened to, by admiring crowds in the halls of firetemples and at family gatherings. Every Parsee, young and old, was well posted in the history of the Shah-nameh, and never lost his interest in the ancient father-land to which he fondly hoped to be restored some day by the all-powerful arm of the British whose great mission it is to carry civilization and justice to long suffering nations. The dream yet remains unfulfilled; in the mean time the parsee youth is losing touch of the ancient tradition and history in this age of examinations and high pressure studies. The purpose of this little book will be fulfilled, if it succeeds in reviving it.

My best thanks are due to the Secretary and Trusties of the Parsee Punchaet for the interest shown by them in the publication of this "Introduction to the Shah-nameh" by largely subscribing to it.

Baroda,
24th November 1898.

J. D. K.

PREFACE.

VOL. I.

An epic poem, like the Shahname, which embraces the whole history of a great empire from its rise to its fall, needs to be examined from various points before being given its proper place as a literary work and a source of history. The origin of an epic poem is one of the most curious of literary facts and at the same time from its inherent nature most difficult of study. Veritable epic poetry is all historical and national and represents the history of a people gathered from oral traditions. All nations have their traditions, for no nation can be formed except by going through stirring periods and heroic actions and producing men who vividly strike the imagination. The people preserve these memories, clothe them instinctively in a poetic garb, and so compose a history in which truth and fiction get singularly intermingled. Ballad is to a barbaric race what a historical record or a bulletin is to a civilized nation. The careful study which has been made for some time of popular poetry has thrown a clear light over the nature of these traditions, on the transformation which they have undergone during their oral transmission, and on the veritable origin of epic poetry. They have found these traditions in the islands of the South Sea under the form of rhymed anecdotes serving to preserve the memory of events and their dates, among the Scots and the modern Greeks in the form of his-

torical ballads composed in commemoration of acts of individual heroism, among the Circassians in the shape of poetic biography of conspicuous men, sung at their funerals and preserved in their families and tribes, comprising the whole history of the clans. Among the Spaniards and the Servians the songs approach so close to epic poetry that it needs only a little more of unity to form an epic. The history of all nations begins thus; for, before anything is reduced to writing, it is preserved in songs and stories and the first historians could only gather their facts from such materials. One can not read Herodotus without being struck at the epic character of some of his narratives which refer to the first epochs of history. The historian makes use of these traditions only in the absence of written documents, while the epic poet finds them the only sources from which he could derive inspiration. He unites them and forms a work of art, keeping the ground-work unaltered and as far as possible also the form of the materials. If he is animated with a true patriotic spirit, his work soon becomes popular and takes the place of the old songs in the mouth of the people which had served the poet as a basis. The public minstrels adopt the new compilation and the original ballads perish. This destruction, almost inevitable, renders impossible in most cases a direct comparison of tradition and epic poems, but the ease with which the ancient songs succumb to the new poem itself proves that it represents them faithfully. It has very often happened that a poet has been tempted to write an epic without a national tradition for its basis. In such a case

the poem has been almost always eschewed by the people. The beauty of language and conception may give these poems a value in the eye of scholars and men of letters, but that does not suffice to render them popular, and it is that which is the veritable touchstone of an epic poem. If it is adopted by the people and chanted in public places, it is a guarantee that it rests on real traditions and that it has only given back in a more perfect form to the nation that which it borrowed from it. The difference between true and false epic poetry cannot be better illustrated than by referring to the poems of Homer and Virgil.

Virgil desired to supply by his imagination the want of traditions, but all his art and all the perfection of his style failed to render his work either popular or national.

One is surprised to find that, while all nations have possessed the elements of furnishing the world with epic poems, only a few have done so. A little reflection however easily accounts for it. Whilst a nation yet finds itself in a state of barbarism, the materials of an epic are plentiful, but it is rare that in that condition it gives birth to a man endowed with the sentiment and the profound art of casting them all into a poetic mould. Later on when it has formed a literature and before it has time to destroy the oral traditions, a cultivated genius may arise who takes to the popular songs with enthusiasm and composes a national epic out of them; but as literature makes progress and penetrates more and more the ranks of the people, it destroys the epic sentiment. The

respect of scholars for artificial forms of learning brings into contempt the plain and simple style of the historic ballads; the minstrels are replaced by books, the songs perish and the springs of epic poetry dry up. If again later on there comes a time like the present when the servants, wearied with artificial forms, turn to ancient popular poetry, there is not much of life left to give food for a new compilation and all that remains to be done is to collect that which has been preserved by chance. There is nothing surprising to find the Persians more rich in epic traditions than several other people. The grandeur of their conquests, the changing destiny of their empire, their long wars, and the magnificence of the monuments raised by their ancient kings happened to leave numerous traces in the memory of a people passionately fond of the marvellous. Moses Chorenesis, an Armenian author of the fifth century, quotes a few of these traditions and, although the profound contempt with which he treats this fiction of fictions as he calls it prevents him from going into details, the little that he says about Lohakh and Rutom proves that the traditions had already taken in his time the form that they have since preserved.

The first attempt to unite these traditions appears to have been made in the followiug century by the order of Nosherwan, who got collected in the different provinces of his empire the popular ballads concerning the ancient kings and got them deposited in his library. The work was taken up again in the reign of Yezdezird, the last of the Sassanians, who entrusted it to Dehkan Daneshwar, a courtier dis-

tinguished by his birth and learning, to fill up the deficiencies with the assistance of several mobeds. This is how Ferdosi gives an account of the work:—

"There was a book of the ancient times in which were written many histories; all the mobeds possessed parts of it and every learned man had a fragment of it. Now there happened to arise a pehelwan of the family of Dehkans, mighty and brave, full of learning, an illustrious man who loved to study ancient history and collect old ballads. From every province he got old mobeds to come to him who had with him fragments of the book. He demanded from them the origin of the kings, their great warriors and the way they managed the world in the beginning, which they have left us in such miserable condition. They narrated one after another before him the traditions of the kings and the vicissitudes of the world; he listened to their discourse and composed a book worthy of renown. Thus his memory lived among the people and the great and the small sang his praises."

This passage needs some explanation. Daneshwar is designated as the founder of a family of Dehkans, because he plays a great part in the epic traditions of the Persians. The Persian dictionaries give the word dehkan the double signification of a cultivator and a historian and they assign to this singular combination of ideas so little analogous the reason that the cultivators in Persia know all history. Both the significations are just, but under certain reservation. M. Quatremere has already proved that

the dehkans formed a class of the ancient Persian nobility. They were, according to the definition given in the Modjmel at Tewarikh, chiefs, owners of lands and villages, forming a landed aristocracy who retained even under the government of the Arabs their local influence.

They were often found exercising magisterial functions in opposition to the governors sent from Bagdad. Their condition under the caliphate happened to be almost similar to that of the Saxon families of England during the Norman conquest, who kept their possessions and who by reason of their hereditary influence are even today known as county families. It is only natural that these families should preserve with special care the traditions and the historic memories of their localities and their ancestors. A great number of them attached themselves to the ancient royal families and princes of the Persian empire whose grand achievments formed the materials of the traditions. It is thus that the Dehkans happened to represent the oral traditions andin this sense and only in this, one finds them mentioned as historians. It will be seen later on that Mahmood of Ghazni invited to his court some descendants of ancient Persian families who were engaged in collecting all the relies of their families. They were veritable Dehkans in the secondary meaning of the term.

Ferdousi made a free use of the word Dehkan in this sense. For instance, at the commencement of the episode of ' Sohrab ' he says " I relate a history

drawn from an ancient narrative which I have heard from a Dehkan. "

It will be easy to cite a large number of similar passages, but it will suffice to show that the word was chiefly used in the same sense before Ferdousi. Thaban having enumerated the written sources of the history of Kaiumors comes to the oral traditions and says " We shall make mention of the narrations of the Dehkans who are unanimous about them (traditions); that we shall relate ; and the solution (of the chronological question) of Kaiumors that we shall give is drawn from the words of the Dehkans &c." Daneshwar was probably a Dehkan in the double sense of the term, a great nobleman who collected the historical ideas of his country. The work written in Pehlvi contained a history of Persia from Kaiumors to Khoshru Parwiz and was called ' Khodai nameh ' or the book of the kings. All works which it has served as a basis have been called by similar names as, the history of the kings of " Ibn-ul-Mokappa, " the ancient book of the kings of Ali the poet ; the book of kings of Abu-Mansour, and the book of kings of Ferdousi himself.

If we take Ferdousi literally, it will be necessary to believe that there existed a large number of traditions other than those of Nosherwan and the work with which Daneshwar was charged only consisted of collecting the scattered fragments. This supposition would certainly increase the value of the compilation of Dehkan, but it is not very probable. For if such a collection had existed, there would not

have been any need for Nosherwan and Yezdezird to get men from all parts of the empire for reciting the traditions they knew. It would have sufficed to procure the book, but the process employed under the two kings proves very clearly that it was a question of putting together the oral traditions that then survived. It may be that some one had thought of preserving some of these traditions in writing and the books containing them had been brought to the court, but it is not possible to suppose that these books already formed a grand collection. It is a remarkable fact that in almost all countries those who first embody all the oral traditions in one work try to give to their narrations a little more of authority by attributing them to some imaginary work.

The conquest of Persia by the Arabs followed almost immediately and the collection of Daneshwar was found by the conquerors in the midst of the treasures of Yezdezird and was sent by Saad Wekas to Kaliph Omar who wished to know its contents and got some parts of the history of the Peshdadians translated. He was satisfied with it and gave orders for a complete translation of it in Arabic; but when they came to passages relating to the cult of fire and the history of Zal and the Simurg, the Kaliph declared that it was a mixture of good and evil and that it could not be approved of. The book was in consequence thrown in the mass of the booty to be distributed to the Arab army. They say that it was carried to Abyssinia by an officer to whose share it fell. It was then translated by the order of the king and was at last carried to India. From there Jacoub Leis

brought it out in the third century of the hijri in [redacted] to translate it in Persian. This is only a fable, ha[redacted] its origin in the history of the book of Calila [redacted] Dimna, which Nosherwan had procured from In[redacted] The fact is that the work of Daneshwar had remai[redacted] in Persia, for we find it in the first half of the seco[redacted] century in the hands of Abdalla Ibn-al-Mokapp[redacted] Abdalla was a Zoroastrian, his real name was Rouzbe[redacted] son of Dadouieh; he had abjured his religion befo[redacted] Isa, Governor of El Irak, to whom he was secretary [redacted] But his Mussalm[redacted]rthodoxy remained always a matte[redacted] of suspicion ; not much a matter of surprise, considering that he passed his life in translating into Arabic a great number of Pehlwi works amongst which was found the Khodainameh of Daneshwar Dehkan. This translation bore the title of the history of kings. It is unhappily lost. Some other Zoroastrians compos-ed works on the ancient tradition of their country, like Mahumed son of Dgehm the Barmekide, Behram, son of Merdanscha, Mobed of the town of Sihapour, Behram, son of Mehran of Ispahan and others. The poet Ali, son of Mahomed, son of Ahmed of Balkh compiled from these materials his ancient book of the kings. The Arab chroniclers used these books for their chronologic studies and for making some very meagre extracts. The Arab population and that which got mixed up with it could not take much interest in these traditions, which to them recalled no past memories and which they had learnt to regard with aversion as valueless, and on which had descended the curse of their prophet. For it was on the occasion of Nasar Ibn-al-Kareth who had brought from Persia

history of Rustem and Aspandiar and had it ed in the assemblies of the Koreischites that humed pronounced the following verse:—

"There are some men who purchase trifling ories in order to turn thereby men from the path of od in a senseless manner and to ridicule, but their unishment will cover them with shame."-[Koran hap. XXXI, verse 6.]

It was, however, otherwise in the eastern provinces of the Caliphate, where circumstances which had operated since the conquest of Persia, at first slowly and afterwards with an irresistible force, produced in the third century of the hijri, a condition of things which restored all their interest in the ancient Persian traditions. It is necessary to fall back a little in order to explain this reaction. The success of the Arabian conquest had been very grand and very rapid; a few years had sufficed to destroy the Persian empire. The ancient religion had been annihilated and the greater part of the population had been converted to Islamism, the Persian literature had disappeared almost entirely and had given place to Arabian literature, and the Caliphate appeared in a manner seated unshaken on a double throne, spiritual as well as temporal. But the Arab influence, great as it was, was far from reposing on a solid foundation in all the Persian provinces. Pehlvi was the official language of the whole Persian empire, it was a dialect born in Mesapotamia of the mixture of races and the Semitic and Persian languages; a language of the borders

as its name indicates. It had become the official language, because political events had fixed since centuries the seat of the empire in the provinces where it was the common language. In the eastern provinces on the contrary they spoke some dialects purely Persian and the Pehlwi was the official and learned language, used in official notifications, inscriptions, books, and worship. It appears that the Zoroastrian clergy made use in part of the provincial dialects, as they have left us some books, written in oriental Persian.

After the conquest, the Arabs established themselves naturally, in very large numbers, as every where else, in the Persian provinces, the most close to Arabia, precisely in those provinces, where the Pehlwi was spoken. There they placed the centre of their empire and founded towns like Baghdad, Koufah, Mosoul and others. They left the ancient capitals of the provinces to go to ruin and worked a change in the population by the force of numbers, political power, religious frenzy, the influence of a novel literature, and the change of laws and institutions. They succeeded so completely in assimilating the population that they gradually substituted their language for the Pehlwi throughout the western provinces with the exception of some mountainous districts. From that moment, the Arab conquest had nothing more to fear in western Persia. The circumstances were very different in the eastern provinces.

It is true that the Arabic tongue easily took the place of Pehlwi and became in its place the language

of administration, religion, and literature, and to the artificial layer of Pehlwi succeeded the artificial layer of Arabic, but almost equally superficial. The Arabs were in too small a number in Persia proper to influence a radical change in the language. They wrote in Arabic, but the Persian continued to be spoken. The conquest was not final, for with the language, the memories which give rise to a national spirit were preserved.

As soon as the Caliphate, which extended with a rapidity relatively too great for a solid foundation, commenced to show signs of weakness, a Persian reaction manifested itself at first slowly and soon openly. The greater part of the ancient Persian families had preserved their properties and with them their hereditary influence, which gained by the weakness of the central authority. The governors of the eastern provinces began to grow more independant of Baghdad, they spoke Persian in their courts, and that which the domination of the Pehlwi had failed to work the domination of a language, altogether foreign like the Arabic, succeeded in working.

It called into existence a Persian literature. All the courts filled themselves with Persian poets and the princes encouraged the literary movement with all their power. This encouragement was due either to a blind instinct towards the manifestation of the national spirit or to a political foresight. That which gives rise to this last supposition is that these princes were the first to search out the national traditions, whose popularity became a great help to them

against the political supremacy of the Caliphs. This course was followed with a remarkable tenacity by all the succeeding dynasties.

Jacoub, son of Lies, the founder of the family of Soffandis, was the first prince of the Persian race, who entirely detached himself from the Caliphate. He was a man of low birth, the son of a brazier, at first a brazier himself, then a free-booter, then a soldier in the service of the governor of Sustan and lastly, the sovereign lord of the whole Persia proper. Jacoub, son of Lies, though entirely ignorant of letters, appeared to have grasped the fact of making capital out of the national traditions. He procured a collection of Daneswar Dehkan and ordered his vizier Abu Mansur Aburezak, son of Abdula Farukh, who bore the title of moatemed al mulk, to translate in Persian that which Daneswar had written in Pehlwi and to add to it that which was preserved of the periods between Khoshru Parwiz and Yezdizird. Abou Mansur entrusted his father's vakil Savud Ibu Mansur at Moamri with the work and gave him four other persons as his assistants. Ladj, son of Khersani of Herat, Iesdandad, son of Shapoor of Scistan; Mahuai, son of Khurshid of Nichapour and Sehadan, son of Berzin of Tous. Little is known of these persons, but their names have an interest as showing the selection of men of the pure Persian race to carry out the views of Jacoub. Abdour rezzak and Savad were themselves of the family of Keschwad, one of the most influential persons of the ancient Persian empire. The work was got through in the year 260 hijri and spread itself

in Khorsasan and Irak. The authors gave it the title of the book of kings, because it gave information of the government and fate of empires; it contained also some history, which appeared strange at first but which pleased when one had grasped its spirit, as the history of the stone which Feridoon kicked, and the serpents that sprang up on the shoulders of Zohak &c. The family of Jacoub, son of Lies, did not long keep the power in their hands. Towards the close of the third century, hijri, their possessions fell in the hands of the Samanades, princes of the blood of Sasanides. This new dynesty took up with ardour the Persion traditions. Belami, vazir of Abu Saleh Mansour the Samanide (350–365 hijri), charged Dakiki with translating into verse the book of Daneshwar, compiled by order of Abdourrezzak. At a time when poets abounded the choice of a poet is very significant, for Dakiki was a guebre, as it appears from one of the verses preserved by Jami. "Dakiki has chosen four things from a world of good and evil, ruby-coloured lips, the sound of the harp, blood-red wine, and the religion of Zerthoust. He took up at the beginning of his work the reign of Gustasp and the advent of Zoroaster; but, when he had composed a thousand or two thousand verses, a slave whom he had purchased stabbed him during a scene of debauch and killed him. Ferdousi has preserved the fragment of the poem of Dakiki though he does not speak of it in complimentary terms as a poem.

It matters little to us to know that the verses are wanting in sweetness, or that the poet was not very happy in the choice of his images; the great

point for the reader to know is that Dakiki's tradition was the same that Ferdousi followed. There need hardly be any doubt as to that, for Ferdousi finds no fault with the subject. It is the man and the poet that he bitterly criticises.

The Samanides had no time to begin again the enterprise, for their empire fell some years after and passed over to the Gaznivides. The second prince of this dynasty Mahmoud, son of Sebektejhin (387–421 hijri) (997–1030), disconnected himself from the Caliphate further than any of his predecessors and, though a fanatic Mussalman, he neglected nothing that would fortify his political independence. The Persian language was cultivated at his court with an ardour unknown before. It penetrated even the administration, when the vizir Aboul-Abbas-Ben Fadhl abolished the use of the Arabic. The court of this prince, the most powerful and warlike of the time, was a veritable academy. Every evening he held at the palace a literary assembly where men of letters recited verses and discussed their merits in the presence of the king, who took a lively interest in it. Mahmood, like the princes who preceded him, interested himself above all in national and historical poetry. His great desire was to form a collection more complete than that of the Sasanides and the Samades and to have it in verse. He sought every where for the materials, equally eager for books as well as oral traditions. One could not pay him his court better than by procuring him the one or the other. It is thus that

he received from Scistan a volume containing a part of Sairal Malouk of Ibn-al-Mokappa and he eagerly set upon getting together men to put it into verse. Khour Ferouz, one of the descendants of Nosherwan, who was then at Ghazni and who was trying to get himself helped by Mahmood, witnessing the interest that the subject excited, offered the entire work to the Sultan. It procured him the means of gaining that which he had come to solicit at the court. The Prince of Kerman heard that among his subjects was one Adar Burzin, a decendant of the Sasanide King Shapoor Dsoul Aktaf, who had spent all his life in collecting the traditions of the ancient kings. He sent him to the court of Mahmoud, who in return made him magnificient presents. He also found at Merv a man called Servazad, who pretended to be a descendant of Nariman. He communicated to the king the traditions preserved in his family about Sam, Zal, and Rustem. It was thus that Mahmoud collected little by little what remained of the traditions of the ancient kings of Persia. But the question was to find a man capable of editing them, sufficiently learned to satisfy the refined taste of a time, when literature had become a fashion and an art, and at the same time sufficiently imbued with respect for the traditions so as to preserve their character. Mahmoud sought in vain for some time. He encouraged competition for the editing of some of the episodes that he selected. Once upon a time, he gave to each of his favourite poets, Onsari, Farroukhi, Zeini, Asagedi, Mandjeng, Djeng, Ten, Kharremi, and Termedi a history to put in verse, declaring that

ould entrust the winner with the composition of at poem that he had in view. At another time essed Ansari to undertake the work. This poet at first attached to emir Naser, a favourite er of the king, then to the king himself, who had m a very warm friendship and loved to have him his bed, when he slept, to hear him sing.

Ansari excused himself saying he had no time. proposed to the king one of his friends who sed all the necessary qualities, being versed in aditions. This man was Abou Kasim Ferdousi us.

A few details of the history of Persian traditions the time of the Sasanides to the time of Ferdousi been given to show that the conquest had not them to be forgotten. It had not even dimi- the interest which the nation yet attached to Under the influence of these ideas Ferdousi ed and carried out the plan of uniting in an e epic all the traditions of Persia from the t antiquity to the destruction of the empire Mussalmans.

here are very few authentic details of the rdousi. The historians of the period say he poet. The man, but for whom the glory n of Mahomed would scarcely have passed sterity, was passed unnoticed by men accustomed to take notes of facts the most striking. One has, therefore, to fall back for the materials of his life on what he has said of himself in the course of his work

and the very meagre information which J
Doulatshah, and other historians of Persian p
give.

Life of Firdousi.

Kasim Mansour called Abu Firdousi was
at Sehdad, a borough about Tous. No author men
the year of his birth but the passages of the S
nameh, where the poet speaks of his age, give the
for fixing it with sufficient exactness. This is
he expresses himself at the close of his work.
I had attained the age of seventy one years, th
humiliated itself before my poem. I have given t
five years of my life in the hope of acquiring a tre
but then they have cast my labour to the winds.
thirty-five years have produced nothing. My ag
reaches eighty years and my hopes have been su
shattered. I have finished the history of Ye
on the day of Ord of the month of Sipenda
(25th Feb. 1010 A. D.). When five times eigh
have rolled away since the hijri I have finish
work worthy of kings.

One need not doubt in reading this
real age of the poet at the time was seve
years; the expression "nearly eighty years"
been only mentioned to correspond with
times eighty of the hijri. This is not the
when Firdousi speaks in one and the same passag
his age in round numbers and exact numbers.
Besides the number eighty is inadmissible for this
reason. If Ferdousi was eighty years old in the year

400 hijri, he would have been born in 320 ; but in the introduction to the history of Yezdizird he gives his age at sixty three. He would in that case have written the passage in 383, but as in the following verse he speaks of the king to whom he wishes all greatness and power and as Mahmoud only came to the throne in 387, one is obliged to place the birth of the poet later than 320. Every thing therefore lends colour to the belief that the figure seventy one marks the true age of the poet and consequently 329 hijri is the right year of his birth. Besides this date corresponds exactly with the other indications found in the poem. For instance he says in the history of the war of Kai Khoshru against Afrasiab " When I was fifty eight years old, I was yet young, but my youth has passed away. I heard then a voice in the universe which made me hope that cares had passed away and that I was delivered from all unhappiness. This is what the voice said ' O man, illustrious and full of pride, there has appeared an image of Faridoun the glorious, Faridoun with the vigilant heart has come to life again and the world and the time have submitted to him. He has subdued the earth by his justice and generosity and his head is elevated above that of all the kings of kings. " Firdousi speaks thus of the accession of Mahmoud to whom all these lines are addressed. The year of this accession is 387 and Ferdousi ought to have been born in 329 to be 58 at the period in question.

The father of Firdousi was called Maulana Ahmad, son of Mawlana Fakhr-eddin-al Firdousi. He was of a family of Dehkans and owner of land situated

on the bank of a canel which took its source from the river of Tous. He gave to his son a learned education, for it will appear later on that Ferdousi was not only well versed in the Arabic language—his Arabian poems excited the admiration of the learned at the court of Bagdad—, but he even studied the Pehlvi language. A knowledge of Pehlvi in the eastern provinces of Persia was very rare and probably cultivated by the guebres and a few Dihkans who needed it to understand the historical traditions upon which they were engaged. One knows little of the young days of the poet except that he had studious and retired habits. His very great pleasure was to sit on the bank of the canal which passed by the house of his father ; but it often happened that the dam in the river of Tous, which supplied the canal with water, built of earth and fascines was carried off by the force of the waters so that the canal remained dry. These accidents grieved the child and he never ceased to wish that the dam was built of chunam and mortar. He little knew then that that wish of his would greatly influence his destiny and would only be accomplished after his death.

Apart from this, little is known of the life of Firdousi till a mature age. He seems to have married before he was twenty eight, for he lost his only son at the age of thirtyseven when he was himself in the sixtyfifth year of his age. He occupied himself from a very early age to turn the epic traditions into verse and when he learnt of the death of Dakiki which

must have taken place a little before 360 hijri, he was passionately seized with the desire of undertaking the grand work which he had scarcely begun. "I desired, says he, to obtain the book to translate it in my own language, I begged it of a great number of men, fearing that my life was not long and I may be obliged to leave it to another. Thus passed some time during which I did not confide my plan to any one, for I did not see a person worthy of being made a confidant." But at last he had the good fortune to obtain the Pehlvi collection of Daneshwar Dihkan which he was so anxious to possess. One of his friends Mohmed Liahkan rendered him this great service and encouraged him in his determination. I had, continued he, in my town a friend who was devoted to me, thou wouldst have said that we were in the same skin; he said "it is a good plan and thy feet will conduct thee to happiness, I shall bring thee this Pehlvi work, do not despair. Thou art young and possessest the gift of language; thou knowest how to make heroic poems, make a new poem of the book of kings and seek glory through it by the side of the great. Then he brought this book to me and the sadness of my soul was turned into joy." After consulting Sheikh Mahammed Mahchouk of Tous he began his great work at the age of thirty six. The first episode that he put into verse was the history of Zohak and Faridoon. In the beginning he worked in secret, because he was on the look out for a patron to whom he could dedicate his work and who was capable of recompensing him. But when the people of

Tous came to know how he was engaged, every one wanted to hear parts of the poem already composed. Abu Mansour, the governor of the province, requested him to recite them in his presence, admired them and from that day looked to all the wants of the poet. This shows that his patrimony was all exhausted or insufficient. Ferdousi showed himself grateful for the benefits he received from Abu Mansour, he remembers them in his preface written after the death of his patron. It is not possible to say exactly what parts of the book he put into verse during this period of his life; for he does not appear to have followe the chronological order in his work, but one of the las episodes that he must have composed at Tous is with out doubt the history of Shiawaksh which he com pleted in the fifty fourth year of his life. It is th very year in which Mahmoud came to the throne c his father (387 hijri). The poet could not hav known it, for he does not pronounce the name Mahmood on this occassion.

Different reasons have been assigned for Firdousi journey to the court of Gazni. According to som the king invited him there; according to others Arsla Khan, successor of Abu Mansour in the governmen of Tous, got him entered there with great difficulty and with the aid of Seikh Maschouk, according to others again the insult that he received at the hand of the revenue collector of Tous forced him to carry in person his complaints to Gazni. This last versicn has little of the air of probability, for Firdousi 10 -where alludes to this pretended persecution and ie

does not give the reason of his journey to court as made in the hope of getting redress from the king. It is, indeed, very natural that Mahmoud, who had need of some one to accomplish his favourite design of compiling a grand national poem for Persia, and the poet, since long years occupied with a work so conformable to this design, who could expect at the court materials more ample and recompense more worthy of his work should seek each other out. It is said that Firdousi at the beginning of his voyage and on his arrival at Hirat was arrested on the strength of letters from Gazni, which was the result of a conspiracy entered into by poets and courtiers equally desirous of keeping out the new aspirant from the favour of the king. He stayed at Herat at the house of Abubekar Warrak until the receipt of more favourable news. This anecdote contains some doubtful details, but the biographies of Firdousi contain several of a similar kind. Even if all these be not quite correct, it does not follow that the picture they give of the court of Mahmoud is not exact. The court, full of learned men greedy and jealous, must have been thrown into consternation by the arrival of a talented poet not unknown to fame, and it is but natural to suppose that the new comer must have become the object of hatred and intrigue of all sorts.

Ferdousi had to undergo too much trouble before he succeeded in attracting the notice of the Sultan. He could not make himself heard at the court meetings, when parts of Seirul Mulk, turned into verse by the principal poets, were read. At last one

of his friends named Mahek undertook to place before Mahmoud the episode of Rustem and Aspendiar. The Sultan then received him and learning that he was born at Tous got him to tell him the origin of his native town. He was struck with the knowledge of the ancient history of Persia that Firdousi displayed, presented him to the seven poets who were trying their abilities with the book of kings and sent him back with presents. One day he got him to compose some lines in honour of one of his favourites, Ayez. He was so charmed with the manner in which the poet acquitted himself that he gave him the name Firdousi (resident of paradise), saying that the poet had converted the assembly into paradise. This was probably one of the first assemblies at which Firdousi assisted. Here took place the celebrated challenge which the three principal poets of the court brought to him, Ansari, Farkhi and Asdjede. They commenced a tetrastich rhyming with the syllable † schen and employed in the three first lines the only word of the Persian language which ended in this syllable. The great knowledge of the traditions which Firdousi possessed brought him out of the difficulty and furnished for the last rhyme the proper name of Pelleben.

This was the brilliant period of the life of Ferdousi. He had won the favour of the most

† They generally place this scene in a garden where Firdousi stayed before entering the town of Gazni and where he found the three poets engaged in rhyming and drinkig. Similar challenges were the order of the day in the learned court of Gazni.

magnificient prince of his time; all the materials which Mahmoud had collected were at his disposal and the means of realising the dream of his life, the achievement of his grand enterprise found itself in his hand. One sees a ray of the height of his happiness in the eulogy of Mahmoud, placed in the preface of the book of kings written at a time when nothing made him yet foresee the unhappiness which his new position was about to bring on him.

Mahmoud gave him the Seirul Mulk and prepared an apartment for him near the palace which communicated with the private garden of the king. The walls of his apartment were covered with paintings, representing arms of all kinds, horses, elephants, dromedaries, tigers and portraits of the kings and heroes of Iran and Turan. Mahmoud gave orders that no one was to disturb him in his work, forbidding every one from going to him except his friend Ayaz and a slave who performed domestic duties. The Sultan professed for him a passionate admiration and was pleased to say that he had often heard the same history but that the poetry of Firdousi rendered it quite new and filled the audience with eloquence, bravery, and pity.

It seems that the episodes of the book were read to the king, as Firdousi completed them, from time to time and the recitations were accompanied with music and dancing.

There is found in the more ancient manuscript of the Shahnameh a drawing which represents Firdousi

reciting a part of his poem before the Sultan. The poet is seated on a cushion and before him is placed his book on a kind of desk; in front of him are the musicians who accompany him and the dancers who follow the music and gesticulate right and left. This semi-theatrical representation of epic poetry was not an innovation, for we know that Naser-Un-al Hareth brought from the court of Nosherwan the singers who sang the exploits of Rustim. Even to-day the Sehair, who recites at Cairo or Arabia the epic poem of Abu Said, accompanies himself with a monochord called the Rebab.

Mahmoud ordered Khwagi Hasan Meimendi to pay the poet a thousand pieces of gold for every thousand verses, but Firdousi requested to be paid the whole sum that may become due at the completion of the poem, intending to amass a sum sufficient for building the dam, a wish he had so much at heart from his infancy. He was then the prime favourite, he did not think that it would all change and did not suspect that he was going to be the object of hatred and persecution. He had been very well received by the most influential persons of the court and he eulogised them in verse.

This excited the jealousy of Hasan Meimandi who soon began to refuse him all that he asked, so that the poet was forced to complain that he was starved while he devoted his time to the work ordered by the Sultan. He appears to have had a continual struggle with want and his complaints about the life

he led at court are very bitter. Having arrived at the moiety of his work, he says "I have thus passed sixty-five years in poverty, want, and weariness," and having completed his work, he gave vent to his feelings in the epilogue by saying that the great and the noble copied his verses without giving him anything save their benedictions and that Ali the Dilimate and Husen, son of Katib, were the only ones who maintained him, especially the last.

"It is he who has given me food and clothing, silver and gold, it is he who has given me the means of moving foot and wing."

However his fame spread rapidly. Before he had barely finished an episode of his poem copies of it spread all over Persia, and the most generous among the princes who received them sent presents to the author in return. These accidental resources did not enrich him, for he counted on the promise of Mahmoud and amassed no fortune. Some of the demonstrations of sympathy even served to furnish fresh food for that hatred to which he was exposed at court. It is thus that one copy of the episode of Rustim and Aspandiar having been brought to Rustim, son of Fakr al dowlet, the Delemite. he gave 500 pieces of gold to the bearer and sent double the amount to the poet and invited him to his court, promising him a most glorious reception. Hasan Maimandi †

† This anecdote is confirmed by another which in its turn serves to throw light on it. In the year 420 hijri when Maimoud made himself master of the person of Rustim, son of Fakher al Dowlet, he demanded from him if he had read

did not fail to make capital out of this favour accepted by the poet at the hands of an enemy, religious and political, for the Dilimite and Firdousi were Shias while Mahmoud and Miamandi were Sunnis. Firdousi replies in his introduction to the Shahnameh to this accusation of heresy with as much moderation as firmness. " I am, says he, the slave of the family of the prophet. I revere the dust of the feet of Ali. I do not address myself to others; such is my way of speaking. If thou placest thy hope in another world take thy place after the prophet and after Ali, if evil comes to thee, it will be my fault. " But at same time he is far from launching out into recri nations so common among the rival sects. He spe of Abubekar, and Omer and Asman with respect a even says, " the prophet is the sun, the companic are the moon and the right path is that which inclu

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the book of kings. The prisoner replied in the affirmat then the king demanded if he had there found an instanc two kings governing the same county. Rustim replied t he had not ; " what folly then " said Mahmoud, " that th shouldst have come to my camp," and he ordered him be put in chains where he remained till his death (see Pri Mahomedan History II p. 268).

Several learned men have doubted that the work Firdousi should have spread abroad so quickly as to enab Mahmoud to put such a question. But Mahmoud knew wi what favor Rustim had received the episodes of the Sha nameh and jealous of the favour accorded to the poet the Dilimite prince, we can well understand Mahmoud unab to resist the temptation of making use of the same book as motive for the condemnation of his enemy.

them all." This tolerance did not disarm the enemies of the poet and even his preface, which is written in a spirit of Umar-Kabli piety, became the pretext of fresh attacks. They found there proofs that the author was not onlya Shia but an atheist and a materialist. His literary enemies brought against him other charges, the subject of which has greater interest for us. The men of learning who were jealous of him discussed in the assemblies of the Sultan the merit of his work and pretended that nothing was due to the poetic talent of the author and that he was indebted entirely to the interest of his sources. His friends defended him and after one of these discussions the Sultan and his court resolved to give the poet an episode to put it in verse the same day so that they could see by the comparison of his composition with the original how much was due to the merit of execution. They chose the history of the combat of Rustim with Aschke bous Keshehani. Firdousi turned it into verse the same day, such as they found in the Shahnameh, and was read before the Sultan and excited the wonder and admiration of the whole court.

Surrounded with all these difficulties Firdousi had yet the misfortune of losing his son aged thirty-seven. He has dedicated to this event some beautiful stanzas which are to be seen in his life of Khoshraw Parwiz. "Thou hast extended a helping hand in my misfortunes, wherefore hast thou sought another path than that of thy old companion; hast thou then met younger friends to outstrip me so rapidly. This

young man at thirty-seven did not find the world to his taste and departed leaving me a heritage of sorrow. He has washed in blood my heart and eyes, he is gone to the world of light and goes to select a place there for his father, years have rolled over me so that there are left no companions for me. My son has his eyes on me and is impatient of my delay to join him. I am sixty-five and he was thirty-seven and he is gone without asking leave of the old man."

It seems that his misfortune did not disarm the enemies of the poet, for we find him the following year complaining of attacks. My book, says he, shall contain sixty thousand verses and words worthy of commendation and proper to chase away cares, while no persian poem will be found to contain three thous[illegible] verses. They give themselves some trouble to find [illegible] bad verses, they will scarcely find five per cent. Nev[illegible]theless a prince like Mahmoud, full of generosity [illegible] magnificence, has not thrown his eyes over th[illegible] histories because of a calumniator and of my misf[illegible]tune. The calumniator has been jealous of my wo[illegible] and has depreciated my merchandise in the eyes [illegible] of the king. But when the commander of the roy[illegible] army of kings will read these words full of sweetne[illegible] and will reflect in the purity of his soul, then I sha[illegible] have from him the treasures to gladden me. Ma[illegible] his enemies never approach him. He will speak [illegible] me to the king and perhaps my labours like seed [illegible] will bear fruit."

It was in the midst of these afflictions a[illegible] troubles of all kinds that Firdousi passed abou[illegible]

twelve years at court * and finished his work. He presented it to Mahmoud. Though Ayaz and the king ordered Hasan Maimandi to convey to the poet as much gold as an elephant could carry, yet Hasan persuaded the king that it was too much of generosity and that an equal load of silver would suffice. He caused sixty thousand direms of silver to be put in bags and had them conveyed to Firdousi through Ayaz. The poet was at that time in the bath and when he came out of it Ayaz saluted him and brought the bags to him. Not doubting that it was gold he received the present with great joy, but when he perceived his error, he got very angry and said to Ayaz that that was not the work of the king. Ayaz told him what had passed between Hasan and Mahmoud.

Firdousi gave him twenty thousand pieces and as much to the proprietor of the bath; then he took from a dealer of drinks, who stationed himself by the door of the bath, a glass of drink and paid him the remaining twenty thousand pieces. He then told Ayaz to return to the Sultan and tell him that it was not to obtain silver and gold that he had taken so much trouble. Ayaz reported the words of the poet to Mahmoud, who reproached Hasan with having made him commit injustice which exposed him to blame on all hands. Husan replied that a present from a king, whether a piece of silver or a hundred

* According to others he had returned after 4 years stay to Tours, where also he spent four years, at the end of which he returned to Gazni. This however is not true, for the poet would no doubt have mentioned this circumstance in one of the numerous passages of his book where he speaks of himself.

thousand, ought to be equally well received and that if he gave a handful of dust it should be considered an honour. He succeeded in turning on Firdousi the wrath of the Sultan and revived the old bitter feelings of the latter against the poet, so that Mahmoud declared that the next day he would have this Karmath trampled by elephants. Firdousi learnt what had passed from one of the court nobles, who was present at the scene, and passed the night in great anxiety. The next morning he entered the garden by the door which communicated between his apartment and the palace garden, which the king always crossed to go to a pavilion where he performed his ablutions; there he threw himself at the feet of Mahmoad declaring that his enemies had calumniated him in saying he was Kurmathi and that he was wanting in respect to the Sultan in refusing his present; besides the kingdom of the Sultan held persons of all denominations, guebres, Jews and Christians and that he had only to regard his slave as one of these. He succeeded in appeasing Mahmaud but he pardoned not the manner in which he had been treated and determined to quit Gazni at once. He returned home, took the rough drafts of some thousand of verses that he had composed but which had not yet been copied and threw them into fire. He then went to the great mosque of Gazni and wrote on the wall in a corner, where the Sultan was in the habit of placing himself, the following verses. " The fortunate court of Mahmoud King of Zabulistan is like a sea.

What a sea! One can not perceive the shore; I plunged in it but found no pearls; it was the fault of my stars and not of the sea."

Directly after this, he gave a paper sealed to Ayaz and begged him to place it before the Sultan after a lapse of twenty days and at a convenient time. He embraced him and parted with a staff in his hand and the cloak of a darwish, for he had not the means of making better preparations for a journey. A great number of court people would have liked to accompany him but they were afraid of the Sultan and Hasan, and it was Ayaz alone who did not give the lie to the friendship for the poet. He sent after him some travelling requisites and an animal to ride. Twenty days after Ayaz placed the paper of Firdousi before the Sultan who opened it and found there the famous satire. It is given here entirely, not only because it contains many traits which relate to the life of the poet, but because it gives an index to the character of the poet better than any thing else.

Satire against Mahmoud by Firdousi.

"O Prince Mahmoud, conqueror of worlds, if thou fearest not me, fear God. Surrounded in this world with royal splendours, thou demandest whence these clamours. Dost thou not know the ardour of my soul? Hast thou not thought of my sword which sheds blood? Thou callest me a miscreant and impious! I am a brave lion and thou callest me a lamb! They heap calumny on me saying that the love of this man is wasted in the use of bad words towards the prophet and Ali. I shall be the slave of both these till the day of resurrection, even if the king should have my body ripped up. I shall not renounce the love of the two masters even if the sword of the king should pierce my head. I am the slave of the family of the prophet; I sing the praises of the dust of the feet of Ali. If any one harbours hatred against Ali, can there be any thing more miserable on earth than that being. Thou hast threatened to trample me under the feet of elephants till my body resembled the blue waves of the sea. I [illegible] nothing, for in the serenity of my soul I have a h[illegible]rt full of love towards the prophet and Ali. What [illegible]ys he, who proclaimed the revelation, the lord of commandments and prohibitions. I am the town of the knowledge of God and Ali is my door. It is the veritable word of the prophet and I bear witness that it contains the secret of his thoughts. Thou wouldst say that my pride comprehends his voice. If thou hast sense, prudence and intelligence, take thy place after the prophet and Ali. If any misfortune

comes to thee from it, then let the error recoil on me. So it is the path and the conviction in which I was born and in which I shall die; know that I am the dust of the feet of Ali, I address no one save him and such is my way. If King Mahmoud swerves from this path, his intelligence is not worth a grain of barley, and then God ought to place the prophet and Ali on the throne of royalty in the other world and then I shall be able to patronise a hundred men like Mahmoud, if my words in this life prove the love I bear the prophet and Ali. There will be kings as long as the world shall last and those that shall wear crowns will listen to the declaration that I make, that Firdousi of Tous, who has sought the society of pure men, has not composed this book in honour of Mahmoud; it is in the name of the prophet and Ali that I have spoken and threaded the pearls of intelligence. When there was no Firdousi in the world it was because the fortune of the world was impotent to produce him. Thou hast heeded not my book and hast allowed thyself to be led away by the words of a calumniator, but whosoever has said evil of my poem has no succour to expect from heaven which turns over our heads. I have composed in fair words this song of ancient kings, and when my age has reached eighty years, my hope has been shattered all at once. Over this world of voyage I have worked long years in the hope of acquiring a treasure. I have composed twice thirty thousand fine verses, all destined to describe battles, swords, bows and arrows, lassos, clubs, coats of mail and steel helmets, deserts, seas, the earth and

the waves, wolves and lions, elephants and tigers, dragons and crocodiles; the magic arts of the genii, the enchantments of Devs, whose cries reached heaven; the renowned heroes of the day of battle, warriors accustomed to battles and the din of war; illustrious kings seated on thrones and surrounded with splendour like Tous, Selim and Afrasiab, like Faridoon and Kaikobad, like Zohak the miscreant without faith and justice, like Kershasp and Sam son of Nariman, who were the heroes of the world accustomed to vanquish. Kings like Hoshan and Tehmouras the vanquisher of Devs, like Minocher and Jamsheed the mighty lord, like Kaus and Kaikhoshru the crowned, like Rustim and the glorious hero of the Roitan, Godrez and his eighty renowned sons, perfect cavaliers in tournaments and lions in combat, like the glorious king Lohrasp, Liphidar, Zerir, and Gustasp, like Jamash who shone among the stars with a brilliance greater than the sun, like Dara son of Darab, Behemen and Iskandar who was the master of the kings of kings, like Ardesar and his son Sehapoor, like Beheram and the good Nosherwan,— such are the heroes, carrying high their heads, whom I have painted one after the other. All are dead long ago, but my word has restored life to their names.

O Prince! I have addressed thee an homage that thou shalt leave behind thee as a memorial. The edifices they raise fall in ruins by the effect of the rain and sun; but I have raised an unseen edifice which rain and wind shall not destroy. Centuries shall roll over this book and whosoever will have intelligence

will read it. I have lived thirty five years in poverty, in misery and weariness, nevertheless thou hadst made me hope for another recompense and I had expected another thing at thy hands. But an enemy, may the day of happiness never shine on him, has said ill of my good words. He has calumniated me to the king; he has made a black charcoal of a burning fire. If thou hadst been an equitable judge, thou wouldst have reflected when they thus spoke to thee. I have paid according to my talent the debt I owed the world by my words. I have rendered the world charming like a paradise by my verses and no one before me had known to sow the seed of the words. There were men without numbers, who had scattered words and composed verses without end, but though there were numbers, none had spoken. During thirty years I have taken extreme pains; I have revived Persia by this Persian work and if the king had not been greedy, I should have had a place on the throne, but as he was not born to wear a diadem he could not be expected to possess the manners of those who are born to wear it. If he had a king for his father, he would have placed a crown round my brow. If he had a princess for his mother, I should have had gold and silver heaped up to my knees, but as he had no greatness in the family he could not be expected to pronounce the names of the great. The generosity of king Mahmoud of such illustrious birth is nothing and less than nothing.

When I had passed thirty years working at the book of kings, for which the king gave me in return

some riches, for which he put me under the cover of want in this world, for which he made me carry high my head among the great, he opened his treasures to pay me my due and gave me the price of a glass of Fouka. † . For a king, who possesses so much wealth, I am worth only a glass of fouka. I purchased it by the roadside and in fact it was worth more than such a king who has neither faith, nor law nor royal manners. But the son of a slave can't be worth much, even if his father had been a king. To raise the head of those who do not deserve it and to hope for good at their hands is to loose the extremity of one's thread, is to nourish in one's bosom a serpent. When thou shouldst plant in the garden of paradise a tree the fruit of which is bitter, if thou shouldst water the roots with pure honey when they need water drawn from the streams of paradise, it will at last show its nature and bear bitter fruit. If thou passest by the side of a piece of brilliant amber, thy garments will get perfumed, but if thou approachest a collier, he will only blacken thee. There is no need to be astonished at the evil which springs from a bad race. It is idle to try to rob the night of its darkness. Do not put your faith in men of impure birth, for black can never be washed white. To hope for good to come from a bad source is to place in one's eyes dust in place of Surma. If the king had been a man worthy of renown, he should have honoured learning, and having comprehended my discourses of all kinds in the manner of kings and the usages of the ancients, he would have given a different reception to

† A kind of drink like bear.

my hopes; he would not have rendered useless my work of a life time. Therefore I wrote these powerful verses; it is for the king to take advice, that he may know henceforth the might of the word, that he may reflect on the advice an old man gives him, that he may not afflict other poets and may take care of his honour; for an injured poet composes a satire and it survives till the day of resurrection. I raise my complaint before the throne of the Almighty, the most holy, throwing dust over my head and saying, "O Lord, burn his soul in fire and surround the soul of thy servant, who is worthy of it, with light."

On reading this the Sultan was in a fury and at once sent men on foot and horse-back in pursuit of Firdousi, promising fifty thousand dinars to him who should bring him back; but the fugitive had a great advantage and he did not succeed in capturing him. Finally the struggle between the poet and the king had only commenced, for Mahmoud was the most powerful prince of his time and Firdousi could hardly hope to find a place of repose through the length and breadth of the Kalifate. The justice of his cause and the power of his genius, though they did not find him all the protection that he needed, at least saved him from being delivered over. The public voice was for him and he did not wait long to experience its effects.

Firdousi turned his steps at first towards Mazandaran, a province which was then under the authority of Kabous, prince of Djordfan, and there occupied

himself in correcting the book of kings.* Kabous, from whom Firdousi asked permission to present him his work and who was himself a man of letters, promised to look to his needs. Firdousi composed a piece in his honour, but Kabous soon learnt the circumstances of the flight from Gazni, and was much embarrassed by his new guest. He dared not displease Mahmoud, who coveted the possession of Mazandaran and who succeeded some years later in compelling his son Minocher to acknowledge him suzerain. These political considerations weighed with him. He made him magnificient presents and requested him to seek another shelter. Once more Firdousi took up his staff of journey and came to Baghdad. He did not know there any one and remained in solitude for some days until a merchant offered him his house. The merchant, having learnt the history of the poet, tried to console him and made him hope for repose as he had come under the shadow of the lord of the faithful. He knew the vazier of the Kaliph and hoped to interest him in favour of his new friend. Firdousi com-

* According to Daulatshah he remained a month concealed at Gazni; this is not very likely. Then he sought shelter at about Mouni, bookseller of Herat, and only left for Mazandaran when the proclamation of the king forced him to quit Khorasan. According to the author of the grand preface, he passed at first into Kohistan, but we shall see further on that his stay in this province must have directly preceeded his return to Tous ; and the poetic fragments inserted in this preface also prove that Firdousi at first came to Mazandaran. "Firdousi having quitted Gazni came to Mazandaran."(Preface No. 1 Maca p. 52).

posed in honour of the vazier a poem in Arabic and gave it to the merchant who placed it in an assembly at the vazier's house. The poem was read in the presence of many learned men of the court and was received with great approbation. The vazier gave to Firdousi an apartment in his own house and related to the Kaliph Kadarbillah, the whole history of the work of Firdousi and the way in which he had been persecuted by Hasan and recompensed by Mahmoud. Kadarbillah wished to see him and at the audience at which he was received Firdousi gave him a poem composed of a thousand verses in his honour. The Kaliph treated him with great kindness although it was disagreeable to him and his court to find that Firdousi had composed a poem in honour of the ancient kings of Persia and worshippers of fire. The poet in order to win his favour was obliged to write a new poem on a theme borrowed from the Koran. He selected the story of Joseph and Luleika and composed a new work consisting of nine thousand verses written in Persian, and in the same metre as the Shahnameh. * In the mean time Mahmoud had received information of the reception of the poet by the court of Baghdad. He addressed a threatening letter to the Kaliph demanding the surrender of the fugitive. It was probably then, that Firdousi left for Ahivaz the capital of the province of Irak Adjemi, to the go-

* This is the only work of Firdousi written after the Shahnameh that is preserved, but it is very rare.

vernor of which he dedicated his poem of Joseph and Luleika. From there he betook himself to Kohestan the governor of which Nasir Lek was very much devoted to him. As soon as he touched the frontiers of his province Nasir Lek sent forward some of his own people who brought him with due ceremony to the capital. Nasir Lek himself went out in state to meet him and received him very graciously. Firdousi confided to him that he was going to write a book to perpetuate the memory of his wanderings and the injustice of the Sultan; but Nasir who was a friend of Mahmoud represented to him that it would be necessary to abstain from saying evil things of others, above all, of kings, and he gave him a one hundred thousand pieces of silver, enjoining him no more to speak or write, or make others speak, evil of the Sultan. Firdousi finished by delivering him up all that he had written and permitted him to destroy it, and composed a piece of verse in which he declared that it was his intention to disgrace the name of his enemies but gave it up at the request of his protector and put himself in the hands of God. Nasir Lek then wrote a letter to the Sultan in which he reproached him for the wrong done to Firdousi, and justified his satire by the indignities that he had suffered. The messenger who brought this letter to Gazni arrived there the same day, it is said, on which the Sultan had read the two lines which Firdousi had, before his departure written on the wall of the mosque. Mahmoud already touched by these verses, relented more by the

message of Nasir Lek. The friends of Firdousi seized this opportunity to represent to the Sultan the wrongs he had suffered by these persecutions, in which his enemies persisted in order to tarnish his reputation, and succeeded in turning his anger against Hasan Maimandi whom he condemned to death.

Firdousi had in the meanwhile returned to Tous, either he had learnt of the change of sentiment in the king's mind or that he had wished to see his native town at all risk, and there he had resumed his ancient habits; but one day in passing through the bazar he met a child who chanted the following verse of the satire.

"If the father of the king had been a king, his son would have put round my head a crown of gold." On hearing these lines, past memories crowded on the feeble old man, he screamed and fainted; he was taken home where he died in the year 411 Hijri, at the age of eighty-three, eleven years after the completion of his great work. He was buried in a garden, but Abul Kasim Gourgani principal Sheikh of Tous refused to read the funeral prayers over his tomb, alleging that Firdousi although a learned and a pious man had abandoned the right path and devoted his time to speak of miscreants and adorers of fire. 'But the following night he had a dream in which he saw Firdousi in paradise dressed in a green robe and wearing an emerald crown. He asked angel Rithivan the

reason of this, and the angel repeated to him a verse from the Shahnameh which had given him admission. After he woke, the Sheikh came to the grave of Firdousi and pronounced the ordinary prayers and related his dream to his assistants. In the meantime Mahmoud had sent the hundred thousand pieces of gold which he owed to the poet with a dress of honour and apologies for the past. At the moment the camels loaded with gold arrived at one of the gates of Tous, the funeral procession of Firdousi passed by another door. They took the presents of the Sultan to the daughter of the poet who refused to have them, saying, "I have enough for my wants and I do not desire these riches." But the poet had a sister and she remembered that he had expressed a desire to build a masonry dam. The dam was built in consequence, and four centuries later it had still remained. Probably this was not all. Nasar son of Khoshru, relates in his book of voyages that he saw at Tous in, 438 Hizri, a big caravansara newly built. He inquired who had built it and he was told that Mahmoud had sent a present to Firdousi but that the poet being dead and his heir having refused to accept it, a report had been made to the Sultan, who ordered that the sum should be used after this building.

We have seen above what were the sources which Firdousi had at his disposal. It now remains to consider what use he made of them. Did he confine himself strictly to the traditions which had been collected during the time of the Sassanians or which were

still in existence in his time among the Dehkans, or did he only use them as an outline filling it up with stories invented at pleasure? The solution of this problem offers great difficulties, because the materials employed by the poet have disappeared almost entirely so that we have no means of a direct comparison. Firdousi himself repeatedly declared that he only followed the traditions. He says, "Some traditions have been narrated, nothing that is worth transmitting has been forgotten. I shall relate to thee over again a part of what has been already related. All that which I shall say has been already said, all have plucked the fruits from the garden of knowledge." He gives some details about his predecessors; he indicates the sources from which he has drawn particular episodes and finally he does all that he possibly can, to convince his reader that he is not the inventor of what he relates. One may doubt the sincerity of his words and believe that he had done all that in conformity with the fashion of the age; but there is no doubt of this sincerity for at a time when it was well manifestly to his interest to represent all these traditions as inventions, he persisted in his first assertion of their genuineness. At the commencement of his poem of Joseph and Luleika he speaks of the book of kings very lightly. He found himself then, as we have seen at the court of the Kaliph where he was reproached with having abused his talent, in reviving the glory of the ancient kings of Persia. His

aim in the composition of this new poem was to ingratiate himself in the good grace of the orthodox court. He declared then that he was weary of Faridoon and Kaikobad and that he desired to write a history not after ancient traditions but after the word of God, Lord of justice. "I shall relate no more the history of kings, for my heart is weary of royal courts and their histories are only fictions two hundred of which are not worth a handful of dust." Nevertheless he does not charge himself with being the author of these fictions and declares having related what he found in books. "I have composed a poem which contains narrations of all kinds but I have only related what I have read."

All that we know about the manner in which he has composed the book, proves that this assertion of the poet is true and that he neither wished nor was able to go much astray from the proper sources. We have seen that he did not dare to begin his work before obtaining possession of the collection of Daneshwar Dehkan; that he read the episodes according as he finished them before Mahmoud who was occupied in collecting these traditions and loved them passionately; that he was surrounded by enemies who watched him and put him to the proof and the only thing they found to reproach him with, was the accuracy with which he confirmed himself to the traditions. Finally he had the Dehkans about him, who had collected on their part the traditions of their

families and who would not have suffered him to falsify them: Here is, how he speaks of the aid that they gave him. "Now I am going to relate the murder of Rustim according to a book, written from the words of his descendents. There was an old man named Azad Serv who lived at Merv at the house of Ahmed, son of Sahl. He possessed the book of the kings and he had the body and the character of a Pehelwan, a heart full of wisdom, a head full of remembrances and a mouth full of old traditions. He traced his origin from Lam son of Nariman and spoke often of the combats of Rustim. I am going to tell that which I heard from him &c." This Azad Serv is the same as Serv Azad whom Mahmoud had invited to his court, as we have seen above. Firdousi has only referred to this name as to many others according to the exigency of his verse. In the midst of these surroundings the poet had hardly anything at his disposal except the choice of a narrative to reject those traditions which he did not wish to employ and to touch up and set to verse the remainder. There is one other reason negative; it is true but very strong to support the belief that Firdousi has not altered the traditions. Had he done so he would have at once betrayed himself, for historic criticism was in his time a thing unknown and in swerving from the persian traditions, he would have lost himself hopelessly among the Musalman traditions. Instances of this confusion are found in Arabian history anterior to Firdousi as that of Thaban who treats of ancient history. Such instances are

also to be met with in some other epic poems, and the Persian romances of the following century are full of them. Firdousi himself has not entirely escaped it. He speaks once of Baghdad at the epoch of the reign of Faridoon. In another passage he treats Alexander the Great as a christian and in a third place confounds Zoraster with Abraham. These errors are so glaring that they prove to conclusion that the author was incapable of going out of the circle of traditions without losing himself, and they are at the same time so very few that we are convinced that it rarely happened that he strayed from the right path. Again these errors bear only on the epithets and do not influence the course of events. The other faults of the narrative, the unequal manner in which events of equal importance are treated, the abrupt transition from one episode to another, the repetition of the same adventures with slight variations and the predilection with which all the great events of one epoch are crowded about a favourite hero, are so many signs that the author has followed the popular traditions which are always and ever inexhaustible about certain events and indifferent about others of greater importance. The gaps found in the narrative are not less significant. Firdousi appears not to have found persian materials for the reign of Alexander the Great. This is easily explained, for the people did not sing of their own defeats. But instead of resorting to his imagination he borrowed from the stories with which the Greek soldiers filled the West on their return to

Greece. Several collections of these stories had been made, some of which still exist in Greek and Latin and one of which has been translated from Greek into Arabic. It is with the help of this last, that Firdousi filled the gap he found in the traditions of his country. He adopted therefrom the history which makes of Alexander a prince of the persian race, son of Dorab, King of Persia by a daughter of Philip of Macedon. Another gap still more considerable which Firdousi found and which extends over the whole history of the Parthian dynasty, has not been filled up by him. The silence of Firdousi proves that his habit was not to give reins to his imagination when the materials were wanting.

Other evidence confirms this supposition. The principal characters of ancient persian history find themselves in the book of kings just as they are shown in the books of Zoraster which we now possess. Kaiomars, Sehmurous, Jamshid, Faridoon, Minocher, Gustasp, Aspandiar &c. play in the epic poem the same part as in the sacred books; only in the latter they appear to pass through a mythological atmosphere which touches them up very bright, but this is just the difference which one must expect to find between religious and epic traditions.

There are extant some Parsee traditions which form veritable commentaries on certain parts of the book of kings. Moise of Khorine knew a century before Nosherwan some popular persian traditions iden-

tical with those which Firdousi produced. The arab historians who have preceded our author agree with him as regards the ancient history of Persia, especially where the desire to make square the traditions of the Persians with those of the Jews have not induced them to make systematic changes in their narrative. But there exists a still better testimony of the conformity of the narration of Firdousi with the tradition universally accepted in his time. It is that of the author of Modjmal Al Tewarkh who lived a century after Firdousi and who has written his work in the year 520 Hijri. He was a man of information and of a critical spirit, little understood by the people of his time. He had studied all the sources of the history of Persia which existed in his time and which to a great exteht have perished since. A passage from his preface cited below shows the extent of the literary resources which he had at his disposal and the importance he attached to the book of kings.

"At each epoch the wise and the learned have collected that which concerns the revolutions of heaven, the wonders of the world, the histories of prophets and kings, and all that which has passed in different places. Mahmoud son of Jesir surnamed Thaban has composed a book full of information but he has only treated imperfectly of the lives and histories of the kings of Persia, who occupied the fourth clime and were the most powerful kings of the world. His chronicle contains only an abridgment of their

reigns in order of succession. Although the histories of kings and chosroes, princes and nobles who have preceded us may have been written independently of the chronicles of Thaban, and that each of them in particular may have obtained in his place a detached recital of his life, although these who have originally collected the traditions may have made versions of the books of the Parsees and may not have omitted anything in their works in verse and prose, and that they may have ornamented their works with fine pictures and vignettes.* I have nevertheless desired to collect in this book the chronology of the kings of Persia, their Genealogies, their expeditions and their biographies, one after the other abridging that which I have read in the book of Firdousi which is like the trunk and in other books which are like branches and which have been put in verse by other authors like the Kershasp nameh, the Framrouz nameh, the history of Behemen, the works in prose of Aboul moayid, that is to say, the history of Sam, Nariman, Kaikobad, Afrasiab, the events of the life of Lohrasp,

* Modjmal Al Tewarkh p. 21 and the following, contain an extract of one of these Persian works ornamented with vignettes. It is the book of portraits of Sassanian kings. It is probably the same work that Masoudi found at Istakher. The Persians have imitated this usuage of their ancestors in the paintings with which they illustrated the manuscripts of epic poems and romances which cannot but be a great scandal in the eyes of orthodox mussalmans.

of Aghous-ch-wehadan and of Kei-Keschen. I have besides summed up that which I have found in the chronicle of Djerir and Liyar-ul-Molouk, or the history of the kings composed after oral tradition and translated by Ibu-al-Mokaffa, and in the summary of Hamya son of Hasan of Isphan, who has followed the works of Mohmed son of Djehm the Barmikide, of Radousch son of Schahouich of Isphan, of Mohmed son of Beheram, son of Dathian, of Heschem son of Alkasem, of Mousa son of Issab. Finally I have followed the chronicles of the kings of Persia which Beheram son of Merdansha mobed of Lehapur has brought from Farsistan and I have verified these narrations as far as possible."

Such was the opinion which the most learned of Persian historians had of Firdousi. He has added more than any other to the dates to be found in the book of kings as he had materials for checking this work, the greater part of which does not now exist. His testimony saves the necessity of citing other historians who have all taken the poem of Firdousi for the basis of their narrations and who have followed him so servilely that they have thrown into oblivion the other sources of the ancient history of their country. It may be permissible to cite one instance which shows that even the Parsees have for Firdousi a veneration which they would not otherwise have vouched for him, if they had not found his work maintaining their ancient traditions in their integrity.

The manuscript of a Parsee legend which bears the title of the history of Sultan Mahmoud of Gazni, has the following.

" They say that Mahmoud assembled a great number of poets, and there Firdousi composed his book of kings. The poets were much vexed at it, and in their hatred and jealousy they entered into a plot and bound themselves by an inviolable oath. This done, they presented themselves before Mahmoud and advised him to force the Parsees on pain of death to embrace Islamion. The sequel of the book contains the struggle which arose between the Sultan and the Parsees who ultimately remained victorious. The Parsees have so much adopted Firdousi that he passes in their legends for a co-religionist and they could not imagine a more veritable cause for their persecution by Mahmoud than the jealousy of the rivals of Firdousi towards the poet. These eight centuries, his popularity has not diminished. The learned imitate the book of kings, the court and the people recite its episodes, and all who speak Persian, Mussalmans or Parsees regard it as the national work par excellence.

The facts that will follow, no way prejudice the historical veracity of the narrative of Firdousi. He has reproduced only a part ! of the national traditions of the Persians as they existed in the times of the Sassanians. The book of kings is far from having drained up all the traditions that were then extant. The immense success that he had, naturally gave an

unusual literary importance to all the traditions written or oral that successive generations had transmitted, and Firdousi had soon a crowd of imitators like all other men who vividly and naturally touch a national sentiment. Almost all the heroes of whom Firdousi speaks, and others of whom he does not speak, became the subjects of epic biographies. The excessive length of some of these works not only proves the abundance of material which still existed but also the interest which people took in it. For these never ending adventures recounted without art or grace would have found neither readers nor hearers if the interest of the theme had not supported the mediocrity of the form. Literary variety does not appear to have been the motive of these compositions. In very few of these the author speaks of himself or his work, or manifests the hope of bringing glory thereby to himself. As to the others no one knows by whom they are written and when, except for the accidental circumstance which enables us to assign them an approximate date. The authors themselves appear only to write for the sake of relating that which interests them and ought to interest others. They seem to look upon themselves as charged with filling up the gaps found in the book of kings, and these ordinarily connect their narrative with some verse of the Shahanameh without any other introduction. These poets have attached themselves with a preference almost exclusive to the history of the family of Rustim who had the hereditary government of Leistan or Nimrouz

and who descended from Jamshid. It was the heroic family par excellence and Firdousi had already devoted to some of its members the greater part of his work without drying up the sources of the traditions which were pleased to attribute to them almost all the prodigies of bravery that made up the warlike glory of Persia. His imitators seized upon these traditions and although several of their works have been lost, there remain enough of them to form an almost complete epic series of the biographies of the princes of Seistan. These are the Kersasp nameh, Sam nameh, Framrouz nameh, Jahanger nameh, Banugusep nameh, Barzour nameh and Behemen nameh.

The Kersasp nameh is the only poem of the series which has acquired a certain reputation. The author of Modjmal Al Tewarikh has made use of it. Merkhond mentions it as one of the books which the historian Hafez Absou had made use of. One even finds it quoted in very recent works such as the autobiography of Alihazin. Kersasp nameh was commenced in the year 456 Hijri and finished in the year 458. The author whose name is unknown furnishes some curious details about the motives which led him to undertake this poem. He relates that one day he was at dinner with two great personages, Mohmed son of Ismail Hasni, and his brother Ibrahim; they told him how his compatriot Firdousi had acquired glory by his book of kings and exhorted him to imitate him to put in verse a history drawn from

ancient books. In consequence he undertook the work and here is what he proposed to himself. "There exists a book of the great deeds of Kersasp a book which recalls the memories of the great, which is full of knowledge and good advice, of secrets of heaven and great events, of wise sayings and enchanting episodes, of just and unjust actions, good and cruel, of joys and pains; the author relates the victories and combats of heroes, their love and hatred, joys and festivities, sorrows and successes, conquests and invasions. If thou readest a little of each chapter thou shalt add much to thy knowledge. Thou wouldst like to hear something of Rustim believing that there was none like him. But when thou shalt have listened to the combats of Kersasp those of Rustim shall appear to thee as worth little. Rustim was a man whom a wicked Dev could carry on a cloud and throw into a sea, whom Homan was able to frighten with his heavey club, whom the guardian of a forest could beat in Mazandaran, whom Lohrab could vanquish and whom the brave Aspandiar could throw about the earth. But the brave Lepadar Kershasp was never thrown on the ground nor beaten by any person in his life. He achieved in the countries of Roum, Chin and Hind, what Rustim could not. Neither walf nor tiger nor lion, dev nor dragon could resist him. When having lost his horse he combated on foot, he depopulated the world of brave men; he

gave treasure to each hero; he beat down elephants with his mace. When Firdousi in his book of kings in gentle accents narrated the traditions so as to give him the palm over other poets, he rendered immortal many combats of heroes; but he did not speak of those of Kershasp. They were offshoots of the same tree but withered, emaciated, and bearing no fruit. Now I shall by my talent bring back spring time to them and make them bear fruit. The king who seeks wisdom has told me, "Sing of this book anew in my name; Firdousi has not related these histories, compose a pendent to his work."

The great ambition of the author of Kershaspnameh was then to equal or surpass Firdousi. He is the only persian poet who has shown literary jealousy of his great predecessor and who has not subordinated himself either expressly or impliedly by the manner of treating his subject. He raises an alter against an alter; his preface is an ambitious imitation of that of Firdousi. Like him he begins with a hymn in honour of the Deity, the creation, the prophet, the sun, and the stars, and ends likewise by the praises of the Prince to whom he dedicates his work and the friends from whom he receives encouragement.

The author takes the history of the family of the princes of Seistan for his theme; he relates the flight of Jamshed, and his marriage with the daughter of the king of Kabul, then he traces briefly the lives of the descendents of Jamshed upto Kershasp, there he enters into his subject and recounts in detail the

adventures of his heroes, their battles with Zohak, their expeditions to Turan, Africa and India, their discussions with the Brahmins, the wonders of the isles of the ocean &c. The character of the work is entirely epic and the sources from which it is drawn are evidently analogous to those made use of by Firdousi. There is a grander medley of marvellous tales of what Kershasp sees in foreign lands and especially in the isles of the Indian ocean, which appears to come from the seamen on the coast of the persian gulf. It would appear as if one was sometimes reading Sindbad the sailor.

The Kershasp-nameh is written in the metre which Firdousi had adopted and which remains almost without exception, the metre of the epic persian poetry. The author, says at the end of his work that it contains forty-thousand verses, but the manuscript which Anquetil has brought from India contains only nine to ten thousand, although it shows no evident gaps. The Kershasp-nameh is of all persian poems, the one which has been most used to interpolate the text of Firdousi. In one manuscript of the Shahnameh three thousand verses of Kershasp-nameh are found collected in one place, another contains one after the other twelve hundred and a third a large number but scattered all over the first part of the work in a series of ten and twelve verses. Macan has printed in his appendix to the edition of Firdousi (p. 2100-2133) a considerable fragment of Kershasp-nameh extracted from a manuscript of the book of kings. With the exception of the first eight pages this fragment corres-

ponds exactly with the manuscript of Kershasp-nameh* of the Biblotheque Royal and contains the history of the flight of Jamshed and the life of his descendents upto the birth of Kershasp. It does not appear why Macan supposes that this fragment has been drawn from a book to which he gives the title of gustasp-nameh and which he attributes to Asadi. All that he says on the subject is entirely without foundation. There is no doubt that the fragment in question was taken from Kershasp-nameh with the exception of the first eight pages borrowed from another poem unknown to us. There is no doubt that there were many epic traditions about Jamshed and there exists one about his death put in verse by a Parsee named Nosherwan; it is named the history of King Jamshed and the devs. †

* This ms. is copied by a Parsee as the formula Banameh Izad Bakhshaendeh Bakhshayezdgar in the name of God the merciful which replaces the Bismillah of the Musalmans shows. It is a very remarkable circumstance that most of the Persian epic poems with the exception of the Shahnameh are only preserved in copies of this kind. It is probable that the Musalmans abandoned them soon on account of the inelegance of their style whilst the Parsees attached themselves to these as souvenirs of the glory of their ancestors of which they believed themselves and still believe themselves to be the sole legitimate inheritors and which they do not despair of reviving.

† This little work has a legendary character like all the traditions preserved by the Parsees. It was very natural that a sect persecuted should attach itself to securing the legendary more than the epic part of the souvenirs. It is thus that extracts of life of Zoroaster written in Persian verse

The epic biographies of Nariman and Sam, son and grandson of Kershasp have been written in prose by Aboul Moayyid, but nothing remanis of it to us and we are reduced to what the Kershasp-nameh says in the last part of it about the traditions relating to Nariman. Sam has found a second biographer in the author of Samnameh, a work in verse of eleven thousand verses. The author no where gives any indication of his name or the time when he lived nor the circumstances which influenced him to complete his work. All that can be known of him is that he was a Mussalman as is proved by the Bismillah at the top of the book. He begins with a passage of Firdousi drawn from the commencement of the reign of Minocher, containing the description of the first court held by that king. Sam there promises Minocher to go about the world and fight his enemies. Firdousi passes on at once to the birth of Zal son of Sam without occupying himself with the expedition, and the author of Samnameh fills up this gap left in the Shahnameh giving the history of the battles of Sam in the west, in the country of the Slavs and Chin,

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. extracts of which have been given by Anquetil are all legendary like those relating to Themurous given in the appendix to Minokserad and several other narratives of the adventures befalling the Parsees after the fall of the empire. There is only the history of the plight of the Parsees in which the historic character predominates. It may be remarked here in passing that besides the known compilation of this latter work there exists another more extensive of which the first is only an abstract.

the discovery that he makes of the treasures of Jamshed and his amours with Peredokht who later on becomes the mother of Zal. Arrived at the birth of the latter the author quietly connects it with Firdousi's episode of Zal in the Shahnameh saying, 'now that I have finished this recital, listen to the history of Zal Zer'.

The Sam nameh is written in the metre of the Shahnameh, the style is as simple with a profusion of fairy tales, but the theme is evidently drawn from such traditions as existed under the Sassanians, for not only there are no traces of Mussalman ideas but on the contrary Gabriel is made to play a great part disguised as a dev with a black soul. When we think with what respect Mussalmans always speak of this arch-angel we can hardly explain his strange transformation in a dev faithfully preserved by the Mussalman author. This transformation of the angel must have taken place during the struggle which existed between the christians and the followers of Zoroaster. After Sam a fresh gap is found in the Seisten series for Zal son of Sam does not appear to have obtained the honour of a special poem. At least the Modjmel-al-Tawarikh does not mention one, and no indication of it is found any where else. As to Rustem, Firdousi has so very well celebrated his life that no Persian author after him appears to have been tempted to write on the same subject. Of the four children of Rustem there is only one of whom Firdousi has spoken in detail. It is Sohrab whose death forms the subject of one of the

most beautiful episodes of the Shahnameh. The three others have been neglected by him and the traditions which relate to them have furnished matter for three epic poems. Jehangirnameh, Framrouznameh and Banugusesp-nameh. Jehangirnameh is a complete biography. The author commences by saying a few words about the death of Sohrab and about the manner in which Firdousi has sung it; after that he enters upon his theme without any other preamble, describes the grief of Rustem and his love for the daughter of Mesiha, and after the recital of many other events he comes to the birth Jehangir. The first part of his life is drawn after the episode of Sohrab in Shahnameh. Jehangir is brought up like him far from his father; he is carried away like him by Afrasiab to do battle with the Iranians and like him he fights his father Rustem in ignorance of his identity. This tradition of a son fighting his father without knowing it appears to have made a very vivid impression on the Persians, for we find it repealed for the third time in Barzornameh. Finally it is met with among almost all people. J. Grimm has published some fragments of a German poem of the eighth century which appears to rest on a basis altogether identical. Miss Brooks has discovered in Ireland two very ancient ballads the subject of which offers a striking resemblance to the history of Sohrab, and Dictrech has published a Russian tale which retraces the same history.

The combat of Jehangir with Rustem finishes with their mutual recognition. Jehangir passes over to the Iranians and plays a grand part in the battles of

Kaikous against Turanis, Arabs, Selavs and Berbers. He is at last killed in a chase by a dev and his mother dies of grief on learning of his death. The author ends his work by praying men of sense to preserve this old history up to the end of time.

This poem contains six thousand three hundred verses and is written in the ordinary epic metre. The only recognition that the author gives of himself is that he wrote this work at Herat. But we neither know his name nor the epoch when he lived. Jehangirnameh is not mentioned by the author of Modjmel-al-Tewarikh ; but nevertheless there is reason to believe that it dates from the first days of epic persian poetry, that is to say the fifth century of the hijri, for the materials of the poem and the garb are altogether epic and there is nothing of the elegance and the lyric tone of the poems of the subsequent era.

The traditions related in the Jehangirnameh do not appear to have been altered by mussalman influence if we except the error committed in mentioning Bhagdad as the seat of the Arab Kings. It is the one error which almost every persian epic author has committed.

Framrouznameh is a little book containing about fifteen hundred verses. It only turns upon a single episode of the life of Framrouz. The author gives no preface and begins by these verses. One day brave men such as Fanbourz, Tous, Rustem, Framrouz, Godrez, Behram, Gev, Kustehem, Relham and Gurgin the

valient were seated before the king surrounded by musicians and dancers; they were seated together the shepherd and the flock, when an illustrious messenger presented himself and requested the favour of a royal audience. The messenger was sent by Nouschad King of Hind and vassal of Persia. He was the bearer of a letter in which Nouschad requested Kaikous to send a member of the family of Sam to his assistance and declared that without it he would be obliged to refuse the tribute he paid to Persia. Kaus appealed to the grandees of his court and Framrouz offered himself to lead the expedition. He then victoriously fought the enemies of Nauschad and the monsters that he met and ended by converting the Indian King and people to the persian religion after a discussion with the Brahmins. There existed at the time of this work which dates from the fifth century many other traditions about Framrouz a part of which one finds in the Barzournameh, the Jehangirnameh and the Behmen nameh. No conjecture can be made as to the authorship of Framrouznameh. The manuscript is written in the handwriting of a Parsee but nothing in the book itself indicates that the author was not a Musalman. There is no reason to believe that the work now extant is only a fragment of a larger work.

The Banugusespnameh is another work of the fifth ceutury of the hijri. It is composed of four ballads or adventures, distinct and without any connection between them. Banugusesp is the daughter of Rustom and the heroine par excellence of the persian epic poetry. She goes to the chase of lions and to fight

battles. She delivers bewitched princes turned into wild asses, and when Rustem and Kaikous in order to put an end to the disputes of the nobles of the court marry her to Guiv, one of the bravest amongst the Iranians, she binds him with her sash and throws him under a seat until Rustem arrives to reproach her and to establish order in the house. Further on she becomes the mother of Pesehen, the same whose name drew Firdousi out from a great difficulty.

Banugusesp-nameh is a small work very informal without a preface or design and contains about nine hundred verses; its author was a Mussalman as it appears from an invocation to the prophet placed at the beginning of the fourth adventure and by another at the end of the book. The Barzour-nameh and Behmen-nameh contain many more traditions about Banngusesp than the book which bears her name and which is probably a fragment of a larger work.

Tradition gives to Rustem several grandsons; Sam son of Framrouz of whom the Jehangir-nameh speaks often, Pesehen son of Banugusesp and Barzour son of Sohrab. The last is the only one about whom there exists a special poem called the Barzour-nameh. This work is more a collection of all the traditions relating to the family of Rustem which Firdousi had neglected than a mere biography of Barzour although he certainly plays there the grandest role. The form of the work would make one suppose that the intention of the poet was to incorporate it with the Shah-nameh although the episode surpasses in length

the original work. It begins like the Sam-nameh by a quotation from Firdousi which he takes for his point of departure. After having copied the last half of the episode of Sohrab the author says " Now that I have finished the history of Sohrab I am going to speak of his son Barzour. Come all and listen to my song about the noble son of Sohrab the illustrious hero. This is what I have read in an ancient book where they have written these histories." Directly he enters into the theme without indicating the sources on which he draws nor the circumstances under which the book is composed. All that can be affirmed of the author is that he was a mussalman as is proved by an invocation to Mohomed. The commencement of the history of Barzour is only a different reading of the history of Sohrab or rather of that of Jehangir. Sohrab a little before the time of going to fight against Iran meets Shahroud daughter of the Lord of the manor of Signan, marries her and leaves on parting a ring for the infant that she would give birth to. This infant was Barzour whom her mother brought up till he was eight years old, having hidden from him his birth for fear that he may go to fight with Rustem to avenge the death of his father. One day Afrasiab arrived at Signan, he was struck with the appearance of Barzour, brought him to his court and sent him to fight the Iranians. Barzour was made a prisoner by them; he discovered his birth and remained with the army of Iran. Then follow interminable adventures and events where appear all the heroes whom we see figuring at this epoch in the Shahnameh accompanied by

a crowd of others. This mass of tradition which Firdousi has not touched contains much curious history and offers some interesting comparisons. The Barzour nameh appears to be composed from sources still more popular than those of several other epic poems. It is difficult to be precise on this matter especially when the same tradition is found repeated in two different poems. For instance the Barzour-nameh which treats largely of the battles against the Selavs always represents the people as devs and calls their king Div Saklab, while the Samnameh speaks of Selavs as a nation of men and speaks of their ruler as king Saklab. It is difficult to fix the date of the compilation of Barzournameh; the Modjmel-al-Tawarikh does not mention it and Anquetil-du-Perron attributes it to a poet named Atai, but he does not indicate the source from which he has derived this information. The name were it the true name of the author gives us no information about him, for besides it we have no informanion touching the poet. To judge by the character of the book the Barzour nameh ought to belong to the fifth or the sixth century. The style and spirit of the composition are simple and epic and the traditions mentioned in the book are not corrupted by mussalman influence. The Manuscript of the Biblotheque was copied for Anquetil from that of Fareskhan assistant to the governor of Surat, and it contains about 359 pages and 65000 verses, but with all this it is incomplete and the three thousand last verses are wanting there. The length of this poem

has tempted some narrators of it to extract some episodes and Anquetil has brought one of these from India called the Sousan nameh (The book of the songster); it is the history of a Turanian Songster who by various wiles ensnared several heroes and sent them in chaims to the camp of Afrasiab.

The Barzour nameh is sometimes though not so often as Kershasp nameh found interspersed with interpolations from the text of Firdousi; and Macan has published one of these in the appendix to his edition. It is taken almost at the beginning of Barzour nameh relating to the history of the first combats of Barzour against Rustem, his alliance with the Iranians and the episode of Sousan.

The last poem of this series is Bahmannameh. It is almost entirely devoted to the history of the family of Rustem, although King Bahman son of Aspandiar is the nominal hero. This poem is dedicated to Seldjou Kidi Mahmoud son of Malikshah. The author whose name is unknown appears to have been a partisan of this prince during his long struggle with his brother. It is mentioned there that the book was conveyed to Mahmoud soon after his accession to the throne. The epoch to which he makes allusion is the year 498 hijri when Mahmoud succeeded in putting himself in possession of the long contested heritage of his father and when he took the title of king. Bahman nameh appears therefore to have been composed at the end of the fifth century hijri. It is divided into four parts of which the first describes the accession to the throne of Bahman

son of Aspandiar and his adventures with Kutaiou daughter of the king of Cashmere and with Homai daughter of the king of Egypt. It ends with the recital of the death of Rustem which Jamasp causes for the king and by the plans of vengeance which Bahman forms against the family of Rustem. The second part treats of the war in Seistan. The aged Zal, Framrouz, his son Sam, and the daughters of Rustem Banu and Sher Banu thrice drive Bahman up to Bactria. At last Zal is made a prisoner, Framrouz is killed and the other members of the family seek refuge in Cashmere. In the third part Bahman pursues the two daughters of Rustem upto Cashmere and into India and succeeds in making them prisoners. He makes captives even of Azarburgin son of Framrouz and of the two sons of Zewarch brother of Rustem. He then gets at the family graves of Seistan opens and desecrates them, then with the exception of Ader berzin sends back all the prisoners to Seistan. In the fourth part Ader berzin is delivered by Rustem son of Tour. He makes war with Bahman and at last concludes a treaty with him. Bahman cedes his throne to his queen Homai and is killed in a chase.

The Bahman-nameh contains about ten thousand verses. It is written with more literary pretention than most of the other similar epic poems and is preceded by a preface in imitation of Firdousi. The author in the following passage gives some indication of the tradition which furnished him his theme. "Here is

what a dehkan says, offspring of a family of Mobeds who has opened to me the door of histories." In another place he says, "The poet requested the narrator to relate the achievements of Bahman the master of the world; the narrator opened his mouth and said, I am about to tell thee exactly this tradition." There is scarcely any reason to doubt that he had already at his disposal the ancient traditions, for he has not borrowed his materials from the Shahnameh and his narrative in general has so much of the epic poetry that he cannot be suspected of having invented his theme. He was besides so completely ignorant that he could not have forged one fable without at once betraying himself. In the fourth part he gives a singular instance of his inability to exercise the least check and to disguise even the very gross defects of popular tales of which he made use. Here is the passage. "The master of the world dragging his fallen colours behind him fled to Ctesephon which we now call Baghdad. Then was there a king renowned for his bravery whose name was Haroun Lapi." We see that the author confounds Ctesesphon with Baghdad and the two with Babylon or with some other ancient great town of Mesapotamia, and althongh he does not make of the king of Baghdad a Kaliph one can see by the name that he gives him that he thinks of the Kaliph Haroun-al-Raschid.

The impulse given by Firdousi to epic persian poetry had gained strength during the fifth and probably a part of the sixth century hijri. The authors

of all the works just spoken of belong to this school. They have all imitated his manner of reproducing the ancient traditions, which like him they have made a basis of their poems, and which cannot be looked at as supplements to the Shahnameh. They have certainly more often than him wrecked on the shoals which this kind of composition presents. They have been less choice in their materials, they have introduced more fables and these more modern, and finally they have been unable to come up to it either by the importance of the theme or the perfection of their form. But notwithstanding all their faults it is necessary to class them among epic poets for they relate the history of their country according to oral traditions and in a spirit altogether national.

The decadence of epic literature began with the sixth century hijri. It may be that the materials were exhausted or that the progress of polite literature had effaced popular memories, or it may be that the national sentiment had weakened, or on account of all these reasons put together. They did not cease it is true to occupy themselves with some one of the kings or heroes whom the epics had celebrated but they did so in an altogether different spirit. It is the kind of epic tradition degenerating into romance and strange tales. These two kinds of fables introduce themselves early into traditions and grow at the expense of historic memories which vanish. The names of heroes remain but they only serve to attract attention to the fantastic narratives. This is what happened in Persia, where we see springing up

on the ruins of epic poetry, two kinds of literature the historical romance and the epic tales both of which make use of the well-known events of the life of a celebrated man which the one fills with a picture and the analysis of a passion, and the other with marvellous recitals designed uniquely to amuse and amaze the reader.

The first who brought into fashion the historic romance was Nizami (B. 513 D. 576 hijri). This was a grand lyric and didactic poem which only sought in history subjects for morality or the painting of passions. He has composed four poems in this system of which three treat of subjects drawn from epic persian history. These are Khoshru and Shirin or the amours of Khoshru Parwiz; the haft paikar that is to say the seven pictures, or the amours of Behramgour with seven princesses and the Iskander nameh or the book of Alexander the Great. The two first are more lyric, the third is more didactic, especially in its second part, but all bear traces of their parentage from epic literature. Nizami was still too near the century of this literature to be able to confine himself to his subject and to the principle laid down by him, so that he allowed himself to relate many of the events drawn from epic poetry not essential to the development of his romance. But although there may have remained some thing of the habits of his predecessors in him, he cannot be classed among epic poets. He has not their national sentiment. He does not like them, derive inspiration from the traditions, but from books and his imagination,

and indiscriminately chooses his subjects from arabic and persian history provided they serve his purpose to make his style and wit brilliant. He is essentially a man of letters. The poem which approaches most by its form, epic poetry is the Iskandar nameh, where the lyric element does not predominate. It is nevertheless wanting in the essential character of an epic which is that of being based on a national tradition. We have seen above that there existed no persian tradition about Alexander, and Nizami only followed the Greek fable to which he added the history of the expedition of Russia against Birda, which rightly found no place in persian traditions, for it took place in 945 of our era.

The example set by Nizami was followed by several distinguished poets of the following centuries who imitated him so servilely that they confined themselves almost exclusively to the small number of subjects that he had chosen. They made a fencing match of good language, refined conceits, and allusions difficult and delicate to grasp, but they had nothing more to add to the known traditions; they took their subjects all arranged in the epic poetry and in Nizami, and all that they did was to treat the subject more elegantly and more artistically than the last. To this class belong the Iskandar nameh, Koshru and Shirin, and the Seven paradise or the amours of Behramgour of Khoshru of Delhi (D. 725 hijri); the Iskandar nameh of Jami (D. 898 hijri); the Khoshru and Shirin and the haft manzar (the seven stations) or the amours of Behram gour by Hatefi (of the beginning of the 10th

century hijri) and the Iskandar nameh of Abd-al-Salam, son of Ibrahim a native of Cashmere. This last work made a prophet of Alexander the Great, and as according to Mussalman ideas a prohpet should be of the Semetic race, the author adopted the pretention of the Arabs who taking the example of the Egyptians and the Persians claimed for their nation the honour of having given birth to Alexander the Great. Nizami is the first among the Persians who mentions this geneology but without approving of it. As it was difficult to show Alexander in the line of Jacob or Ismail they hit upon the ingenious expedient of giving him Esau for his ancestor. The mother of Alexander is then according to Abd-al-Salam an offspring of the race of Esau; she is a virgin and miraculously becomes enciente; she flies from men and dies in giving birth to a son whom Philip king of the Greeks, the Russians and the Franks finds by the side of his dead mother. He adopts him and has him educated by Aristotle. The recital then falls directly into the Greek legend varying from the theme of Nizami.

All these romances notwithstanding their form do not belong to veritable epic poetry. They are all written in verse and in a style so ambitious that it is necessary to be learned to comprehend them. The tales which form a second branch of the degenerate epic literature have a character more simple and are written by writers of a low degree and are intended for readers not very learned.

One of the most indefatigable compilers of these tales is an Arab, Abu-Thaher-Ibn-Hasan Ibn ali Ibn Mousa of Tharsons. He appears to have made an immense collection of tales about the history of Persia, a collection which has been later on divided into separate works to which are given the names of heroes and kings who form the subject of each part, as the Darabnameh, Keharman nameh, Kiran Habshi and others. The Darab nameh is a volume of eight hundred pages which comprises the lives of Bahman, Homai, Darab and Alexandar. The outline of this compilation is taken from Firdousi but is filled up by a mass of absurd fables of which a short one is produced here in order to give an idea of the book. "Alexander having in his youth fled to the Court of his grandfather Philip arrives at the capital of the country of the Berbers, whose king had espoused the mother of Alexander whom Darius had repudiated. He is afraid to make himself known and not having the means of living, he presents himself before the assembly of the kings scribes and asks for an employment. One of the scribes noting his superhuman beauty and wishing to have the honour of having a servant of so good a mien engages him for two silver dicams a day. His work consists of carrying in the morning the portfolio of the scribe to the Dewan and of taking it back in the evening. One day the master falling ill sends young Alexander to the assembly to get him his bundle of papers but the scribes invite him to do the work of his master; young Alexander replies that he could not do so without his master's permission; he returns to his master, obtains his leave

and sets himself to work. The scribes see with jealousy the beautiful letters formed by his reed and become jealous of him, calumniate him to the sick man and cause him to be dismissed. Alexander again finding himself without resources purchases an astrolable, and places himself on the high way to tell the fortunes of passers by, for Aristotle had well instructed him in the mysteries of astrology &c." Space does not permit of giving more extracts, but the entire work consists of similar tales.

The Keherman nameh is an immense work which fills eight volumes; the Biblotheque Royal possesses three translations of it in the Turkish language. Keherman is the son of Tehmurous, the devs steal him in his infancy and bring him up in the environs of mount Kaf where he amuses himself by destroying four hundred hippopotamus and becomes so ferocious that when he finds no other enemies to fight he fights against himself by taking a heavy mace of iron in each hand. He at last returns to countries inhabited by men and establishes himself in the mountains of Kohistan. Kiran Habshi is the history of a hero who lived under Kaikobad and who after innumerable exploits became the Viceroy of Bactria. This tale is drawn from the compilation of Abu Taher and is altogether composed in the same taste as the others. The Hoshang nameh, the Fagfour nameh, the Tehmorous nameh and the history of Jamshid are of the same class. It is a veritable blue Biblotheque in which the tradition such as is found there has degenerated to the last degree.

These tales are to the Shahnameh what Siegfried the cornu of German peasants is to the ancient Edda. Their authors are not content with continually mixing up the Persian and Mussalman traditions as by making Adam the father of Kaiomours and Sith his son, or marching the Army of Hoshang under the banner of Solomon (as in the Keherman nameh) or making the Sihmourg relate to Alexander the conversation which the arch-angel Gabriel and Solomon held in heaven (as in Darab nameh); but they confound all to such an extent that it is difficult to believe that they had only read the epic poems. It is thus that the epic traditions of the Persians have run over the entire circle of transformation through which a tradition can pass. Liberally moulded by the people under the ancient dynasties, preserved by the Dehkans during the decadence of the empire, collected by fits and starts under the last Sassanian Kings, the tradition seemed bound to perish under the arab invasion and the change of masters, religion and language to which Persia had to submit under Mussalman domination; but it withstood all trials, was reproduced even in the language of the conquerors and became in the hands of the vanquished people a means of defence. After many fruitless attempts there appeared at last a man who knew how to convert it into a veritable national epic poem and the Shahnameh during a century was followed by a great number of poems composed in the same spirit and which completed it in all its parts. These poems dried up the epic traditions but the nation was not weary of listening to the accounts of favourite heroes

under new forms. Nizami created the historic romance in which he preserved the outlines furnished by the epic poets filling it up according to the taste of the time with refined sentiments. His school dominated in Persian literature for several centuries and tradition was growing more feeble under the weight of ornamentation of which there was always a surfeit. On the other hand the people to whom these romances were not intelligible created tales in prose in which there gathered about popular legends and names renowned in poetry and which were completely estranged from historic traditions. Thus perished the living and oral traditions but the great work of Firdousi has remained and has not ceased to be the object of admiration to the learned and of love and veneration to the people. Literary essays and criticisms on the Shah nameh are less numerous and less noteworthy than one would suppose from the immense popularity which this book has enjoyed for eight centuries in the Mussulman world. The critical edition of Baisangar Khan (829 hijri) is the only refined essay on the text that the Mussalmans have attempted. There are sometimes found on the margin of manuscripts a certain number of notes, but there is no commentary of the entire work. The prefaces sometimes terminate by a very concise lexicon which has been reproduced by Maçan. The first translation of the book of kings dates from the sixth century hijri. It is in arabic prose; the author is Kawam-eddin Aboul-Fateh Isa Ibn-Ali Ibn Mahomed, native of Isphan

who dedicated it to Aboul Fateh Isa the auoubite son of Malik-al-adil Abubekar. It is an extract which is hardly useful to fix the sense of any passage, but the date renders it important for the critic of the work when the question is of considerable interpolations. Latar aly-Effendi presented in the year 916 hijri to Kanson the Gaundi a complete translation of the Shah nameh in turkish verse. Another translation was executed in prose by Mehdi officer of the seraglio in the year 1030 and dedicated to Othman the second. Tanakool Beg son of Tawakool Beg in the service of Dara Sehekop son of Humayoon and Viceroy of Lahore published in the year 1063 hijri at the request of Samsherkhan under the title of Muntkhal-al-Tawarikh an abridgment of Firdousi in Persian. This work is written in prose, mixed up with numerous passages in verse. It is much shorter than the extract of Kawam-eddin and stops at the death of Alexander after which one finds nothing more than a summary of several pages containing only the names of Sessanian kings. Tawakool-beg had before him a manuscript full of interpolations and his work is of no use to a critic. He finishes his work by an extract from preface No. 2. There is another extract of the book of kings entirely in prose. It is entitled Shah nameh Naser, the book of kings in prose. This book is the work of a Parsee as one can be assured by reading the life of Zoroaster which Hyde has taken from it and which is amplified by the aid of Zerthoust nameh, a legend of which a Mussalman author would not have made any use. Sir W. Ousley has published some other fragments of this extract.

Europeans have only lately occupied themselves with the Shah nameh. The first who published fragments of it, is Sir W. Jones in his commentaries of Asiatic Poetry in 1774. Firdousi was even then so little known that Sir W. Jones believed that the Shah nameh was a collection of diverse historical poems which some one had brought together in a single volume arranged according to the chronological order of the subject and of which one in particular distinguished itself by its epic character. Jones has given some extracts of the shah nameh with a part of the Satire accompanied by a latin translation. The first who attempted to translate the entire work was J. Champion who has published the commencement of his work under the title of 'The poems of Firdousi translated by Joseph Champion Esqr. 1785'. His translation contains an extract of the great Persian Preface. The translation is in verse and ends with the marriage of Zal with Roudabeh. This work appears to have had some success for it was reprinted in London in 1790. It can only be attributed to the novelty of the subject; for the translation is conceived in a false system of paraphrase and gives no idea of the author or its style.

Count Ludolph occupied himself almost at the same time with a literal translation of the book of kings in German prose but there appeared only fragments of it containing the history of Jamshid and Zohak. It is a conscientious work and it is to be regretted that it did not appear complete. Capt. W. Kirkpatric inserted in his essay on Persian

poetry which unhappily remained incomplete, the passages of Firdousi relating to Dakiki.

Hagerman published in 1808 at Gotterman a dissertation under the title of "Monumenti Persipolitanie Ferdousos poeta persarum heroico illustratio" in which he gives a fragment of the history of Jamshid which however is very incomplete. Later on he published in the journal of M. Sehligel entitled 'Europa' a part translation of the life of Behram gour.

Mouradjea d'Ohsson has taken Firdousi for a basis of his historical picture of the Orient. It is an extract of the Shah nameh in which the author has desired to preserve that which is historical, completing it by some facts drawn from other sources.

E. Scot Waring in his 'Tour to Shiraz (1809)' has published a great many passages from Firdousi but he more often contents himself by accompanying them with the translation of Champion.

In the same year Wilkin published in his 'Institutioneo linguœ Persicœ' some fragments of the history of Alexander followed by a Latin translation.

Wallenbourg occupied himself during this time at Viena with a translation of the whole work in French prose, but it has not been completed and only a translation of the preface has appeared under the title of 'Notice of the Shah nameh (1810).'

The East India Company had since some years ordered the publication of the entire text of Firdousi. Lumsden then professor of Arabic and Persian at the College of Fort William was charged with this work and organised a bureau of Munshis who collected 27 manuscripts. The first vol. alone appeared under the title of " The Shahnameh being a series of heroic poems on the ancient history of Persia by the celebrated Aboul Kasim Firdousi of Tous (1810)." The impression of this edition is very correct but as coming from an editor so learned and with such preparations it fails to satisfy the expectations of a critic, for notwithstanding the number of collected manuscripts the text of a manuscript of the seventeenh century lent to Lumsden by the late Sir John Malcolm is followed. The Orientals took it for a text and there is no doubt that the Munshis followed their own taste rather than the opinion of Lumsden who had little time to give to this work. This edition was not continued, but the copy which had been prepared for the second volume served for the edition of Sohrab published by M. Alkinson under the following title. " Sohrab a poem freely translated from the original Persian of Firdousi by James Alkinson (1814)." The following year appeared in London a little work entitled " Episodes of the Shah nameh of Firdousi translated into english verse by Stephen Weston." This book only contains a small number of passages followed with a text in Latin characters.

Wahl a Halle had the intention of publishing a complete translation of Firdousi and announced it

in 1816 in the fifth vol. of the Mines of the Orient. Only a specimen of it appeared in blank verse accompanied by a text and notes.

Hammer published in 1818 his history of persian Poetry in which he inserted a translation in German verse of the seven adventures of Aspandiar and of a fragment of Sohrab (Geschichte der Schonen Redekunste Persens p. 56-76). He had already published two other fragments of Firdousi of which one contains the history of Khoshru and Shirin, the other the adventures of Sam and Zal.

S. de Sacy published the same year the text and translation of the voyage of Barzouich in India.

In 1820 appeared the work of Goerres which bears this title ; " Das Holdenbuch von Iran." It is a very detailed extract of Firdousi and the only one which even now gives a just idea of the work. One may without doubt refuse his assent to the idea that the author puts forth in his preface and criticise some details of the translation, but it is necessary to recognise that the extracts are made with an exquisite sentiment of epic poetry.

Ross better known under the pseudonym of Gulschen had conceived the plan of a complete translation of Firdousi accompanied by his text but there have only appeared some specimens in the Annals of oriental literature. A complete edition of the book of kings appeared in 1829 under the title of "The Shah

nameh a heroic poem by Abul Kasim Firdousi published by Turner Macan". It contains a preface in English in which the editor gives an account of his work and a life of Firdousi; a persian introduction where he reproduces mixed with his own reflections the greater part of the persian preface No. 1; a complete text of the book of kings and lastly an appendix where are collected all the rejected episodes of the text as interpolations, and a lexicon. The editor has reproduced almost without change all that was printed in the text of Lumsden always indicating the suspected passages by an asterisk; the remainder of the work forms the first critical compilation of the text of Firdousi which has been undertaken by a European. Macan was better fitted than any other to undertake the task for he was well read in Persian literature and had passed the greater part of his life in the best Mussalman society of Upper India. It is to be regretted that the condition of his eyes did not permit him to publish a selection of readings and an English translation of the work which he wished to undertake.

Atkinson published in 1832 a work under the title of "The Shah nameh of the Persian Poet Firdousi translated and abridged in prose and verse." This book is only a translation of the Persian extract made by Tawakool-beg and ends like the original with the death of Alexander the Great. The last volume contains a new compilation of the translation in verse of the episode of Sohrab. Finally Viellers publish in 1833 a collection of the passages of Firdousi under the title of "Chrestomathia Schahnamiana." It contains

the text of the passages already published by Wilkin, Wahl and Silvester with readings and a lexion.

After an enumeration of all the works of which the book of kings has been the subject, it will be interesting to know the number and character of the manuscripts referred to for the purpose of this publication. The Biblotheque Royal of Paris possesses eight, and these were all made use of, as well as the thirty manuscripts of the library of the East India company some of which came from the library of Tipoo Saheb, so also the manuscript of the Bodlian Library copied by a Parsee, and for this reason in itself a curiosity; the two manuscripts lent by Sir T. Malcolm were also lent under contribution, one of which served as a basis to the Calcutta edition and the other was a part of the library of Nadirshah The best of all these manuscripts of Firdousi is the one which belonged to Col. Doyle who presented it to the Asiatic society of London. This magnificient volume comes from the imperial library of Delhi and all the emperors from Baber the conquerer of India to Shah Alum affixed their seals to it. It will not be easy to give to persons who never had to compare the manuscripts of the book of kings a just idea of the number of readings they furnish and which may be divided into three principal classes :—

(1). The grand interpolations drawn from other epic poems.

(2). The verses which add nothing to the recital and are the work of some learned reader or

copyist who has taken the liberty of lengthening the poem by his amplifications.

(3). The various readings proper where the copyist has only changed some words of a verse or an entire verse either through negligence or in order to correct the text or to substitute a new term for an old word difficult to understand.

The first class is the most easy to detect ; the two others leave great room for doubt when the number and authority of the manuscripts which contain the one or the other version are equally balanced and when the expressions do not betray a modern origin. Finally this immense variety of readings need not cause any doubt about giving a sufficiently authentic text, for with the exception of the great interpolations which are found in the poems from which they are borrowed and which in consequence present no serious difficulty, all the other variations influence but little the march of the narrative and are for the most part only repetitions, or transposition of verse or the substitution of arabic for persian words out of use.

VOL. II.

This volume contains five episodes, four of which belong to the reign of Kaikaus and the fifth forms the beginning of the reign of Kaikhoshru.

The first of these episodes is that of the battle of Hamaveran the seat of which according to the account given in the Book of Kings must be placed in Cyrenaique. But the narrative is very obscure and the tradition on which Firdousi relies was corrupted long before his time. The Kershasp nameh also contains some traditions relating to a war of the Persians in Africa; they do not appear to correspond with the expedition of which Firdousi speaks, but it is possible that they have contributed to displace the true ground of what Firdousi calls the war of Hamaveran. It appears that in this last narrative there are traces which indicate the tradition on which it is founded in connection with an expedition on the Red Sea which the Persians would have to pass in going by the side of Makran, but until now no means of clearing this point have been found. The oriental lexicographers place Hamaveran as often in Syria as in Yemen; this proves that they were reduced to make conjectures about the position of the country which bears this name in epic traditions.

The episode of Sohrab is the best known of all those in the book of kings and the most perfect with respect to art. This history of the combat of a

father and son who do not make each other out has made a tour round the world and in the preface to the first volume there is given a summary indication of traces which it has left among other people. The episode of Shiawax is one of the most curious in the book of kings. It treats of events which resulted in a change of dynasty placing the empire of the orient in the hands of the family of Cyrus. It is well known how the traditions concerning this epoch have been mixed up with grecian times and they have not gained in clearness in their passage to Firdousi. In the episode of Shiawax and the commencement of the reign of Kai Khoshru there appears a double recital of one and the same tradition. It begins with the arrival of Shiawax in Turan and continues until his death, and again during the continuance of the narrative some well known though less numerous traces are permitted to re-appear. The double play at Maidan, the double marriage of Shiawax with the daughter of Piran and of Afrasiab, the double building of the towns of Siawasch guird and of Gangdis, the double birth of Khoshru and Firoud, the double prophecy addressed by Shiawax to Piran and Firangis, the double combat of Guiv against Piran and Berman, and lastly the death of two members of the royal family of Persia both of the name of Rivniz appear incapable of being explained otherwise. The copyists of some of the manuscripts appear to have been struck with these repetitions for they have omitted some pages of the episodes of Shiawax where the useless repetition appeared to offend very much, but these violent suppressions have done no good except

mutilating the text. It is besides a circumstance which is often met with in popular traditions. The accidental alteration of a name suffices to give rise to a belief in two like but distinct events and the unavoidable change which a tradition undergoes in passing from the mouth of the story teller necessarily tends to give greater divergence to two recitals at first identical. Such mistakes besides serve to convince us that an epic poet has strictly adhered to such materials as he found; for had he wished to invent he would have guarded against repetitions so palpable. It is more difficult to explain how several verses repeat themselves in the episode of Shiawax. They are to be found among manuscripts prior as well as subsequent to the revision of the text made by the order of Baisanghĕr-Khan. This episode is very long and composed at diverse intervals; it is therefore possible that Firdousi used de novo verses which he still carried in his memory forgetting that he had already made use of them. Marks of similar negligence are to be found in Indian epics and in the heroic poems of the middle ages.

VOL. III.

The third volume of the Book of Kings is entirely taken up with the continuation of the history of Kai Khoshru, the close of whose reign has even taken up a portion of the fourth volume. This distribution of a single reign in several volumes has only slightly inconvenienced the rest. The entire work has been made up of episodes and not reigns and considering the materials at the command of Firdousi he could not have done otherwise. Each episode is a poem complete in itself and almost independent of the others; it is separated from the rest by an introduction and an epilogue which sometimes contain the indication of the sources drawn upon by the poet, sometimes a panegyric and sometimes simply moral and pholosophic reflections.

The episodes which are included in this volume are five in number; the war of the Iranians against the Turanians called in persian tradition the combat of Kamous of Kachan, the war of the Iranians against the Khakan of Chin, the conflict of Rustem with Akwan dev, the abduction of Bejen son of Gev by Manijeh daughter of Afrasiab, and the combat of the twelve warriors. Of these the first three form part of the traditions concerning Rustem and the last two relate to the family of Kawch the most renowned of the race of persian heroes after Rustem. The mus-

salman chroniclers who did not know how to reconcile the facts furnished by the bible and the greek historians with the persian traditions had recourse to the information derived from these sources about this family and the vagueness of it rendered the task more easy for them. It is thus that several mussalman historians have set down Nabuchodonosor to be the son or the grandson of Godrez, and they describe him as the viceroy of the western provinces of the persian empire; others identified him with Godrez himself; and all this probably did not rest on any thing more than a passage in this volume in which Godrez is described as being entrusted with the administration of Isphan. The combat of Rustem with Akwan Dev is one of a collection of fairy tales to some of which Firdousi makes allusion, as for example when he speaks in the episode of Manijeh of the magic stone of Akwan which Afrasiab had caused to be placed on the dungeon of Bejen. The tales appear to have been preserved a longtime after Firdousi. Several modern manuscripts of the Book of Kings relate a little episode of this kind; it is the recital of a combat which Rustem had with the son of Akwan Dev at the time of raising the magic stone.

The combat of a dozen champions is one of those pieces of Firdousi the most admired in Persia and this history is as popular as the combat of Horatic and Curatic was at Rome. It is sometimes described as the combat of eleven champions but it is the very same adventure; the difference comes from the fact that in the last and decisive

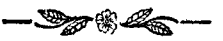
combat between the heroes of Iran and Turan there were only eleven combatants on each side; in order to arrive at the number of twelve they ordinarily add to this combat that between Bejen and Houman which took place a little before and in which the latter succumbed. The subject matter of the text comprised in this volume has undergone in many manuscripts a greater number of interpolations than any other part of this work. The added pieces sometimes form episodes of considerable length and it is mostly between the history of Manijeh and that of the twelve champions that the copyists have inserted entire poems. It is thus that one finds in several places the poem of Sousen the magician and some long extracts of the epic history of Barzor son of Sohrab which is still extant under the title of Barzor nameh. It seems the copyists have introduced these episodes for the purpose of making up the sixty thousand couplets that the work is supposed to comprise as declared by the author himself, but which he did not really attain. These interpolations are easy to recognise and the original text is soon recovered, but there are other less considerable pieces which are sometimes very embarrassing; these are small pieces intermixed with long episodes. In general these doubtful pieces are written in a style which gives proof of a modern origin; sometimes they are uselessly repeated and ordinarily they are wanting in the ancient manuscripts. Nevertheless there are cases in which the authenticity of a piece remains uncertain, as for example the history of

the marriage of Firangis the mother of Khoshru with Faribourz. This piece is not to be found in all the manuscripts and it is not unlikely that it was borrowed from some other epic poem.

All the pieces which form part of this volume appear to have been composed by the author in his young age or at least before he had arrived at the Court of Mahomed of Gazni whose name no where appears.

The history of Bejen and Manijeh is in all likelihood a part of this volume which was committed to writing at the earliest period. Firdousi expresses in a very picturesque manner the circumstance under which he commenced to put this narrative in verse. The friend of whom he speaks and whose guest he was at this time was to all appearance Memoud Lashkari the first confidant of this great poetical undertaking and to whom he owed the information about the grand collection of traditions formed by Dehkan Daneshwar. The character of freshness which is noticeable in this narrative accords well with the supposition that it is a work of Firdousi's young age and the versification carries some traces of the want of experience such as the frequent use of the final alifh added to the subject of the rhyme or the metre. This expedient is accepted in persian poetry but Firdousi has no where made so much use of it as at the beginning of the history of Bejen and Manijeh.

VOL. IV.



This volume contains the history of the most brilliant epoch of Persia, during which time the country made the greatest impression on the world both by its sword and its civilization. We find here Iran triumphant over Turan, we notice during this period the advent of Zoroaster and the spread of his religion, we see the power of the great kings reaching the zenith of its glory and observe also the signs of its future decay. The last great figures of the epic, Kai Khoshru and Afrasiab, Aspandiar and Rustem disappear; the ancient tradition begins to close and there remains only a short interval to be filled up between the accession of Bahman to the throne and the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great. Until this period the tone of the book does not change and the materials which Firdousi uses continue to be of the same nature; they consist above all of the popular recitals collected under the Sasanides to which the poet adds the traditions that he was able to discover and the origin of which he sometimes indicates. It is thus that he gives us some details unhappily very incomplete of the source from which he has drawn the narrative of the death of Rustem.

The more one reads the work of Firdousi the more he will be convinced that he has invented nothing and that he has only contented himself by clothing in brilliant colours the traditions which

formed the popular history of Persia. These traditions came to find a place in the country as among other people, from ancient recollections preserved in the popular songs, perpetuated by oral transmission and changed gradually by the introduction of marvellous adventures and romances which often end by covering the original to such an extent that it is entirely lost. One sees an extreme instance of this in the adventures of Gustasp at Roum which hardly preserves a trace of the intercourse that took place between the Greeks and the Persians. Nothing is more interesting for the literary critic than the heroic fable of the Persians, for with one rare exception in the history of literature we are able to control it almost to a certain point with the aid of authentic documents and to form by analogy an opinion about the degree of historic importance to be given to popular traditions among other nations, where no certain and enduring evidence comes to help us. It is desirable here to note that the Shah nameh should not be looked upon either as a history or as an invention of the poet, but as an exact representation of the Persian traditions such as they existed in the tenth century. All the fragments of this popular history which we find in the book of the Parsees in Moise de Khorene and in the Arab historians prior to Firdousi coincide so much with the book of kings as to leave no reasonable doubt on this subject. Some times the form of an ancient ballad is so well preserved that one might almost re-construct it. At other times one perceives a certain literary labour called

to aid in order to arrange perfectly different narratives of the same event, or to unite in one single narrative the recital of different but analogous facts. The present volume offers an example of such a kind in the narratives of the expedition of Kai Khoshru against Gangdis. One does not know whether to attribute to Firdousi or to the compilers of the collection he has made use of, this work of combination which has not rendered clear that which already was probably obscure enough ; but it is evident that if the author had invented this history the arrangement would have been more intelligible.

The part of the volume the most curious for the literary critic of the book of kings is the fragment composed by Dakiki and preserved by Firdousi, a little from pity for the memory of his predecessor, a little from the vanity of the author who wishes to show his own superiority. He speaks with little esteem of the talent of Dakiki and even a European reader perceives the difference between the manner of recital of the two poets; but the materials they have used are almost the same and in the resemblance of the ground work and contents the work of Dakiki would have been for us the equivalent of the Book of Kings.

VOL. V.

This volume begins with the history of Bahman son of Aspandiar (Artaxerxes Longman). The Persian tradition has only preserved the memory of this Prince in connection with the destruction of the illustrious family of the feudatory Princes of Seistan who had played particularly in the person of Rustem such a grand part in the epic history of Persia and whom Bahman exerminated to avenge the death of his father. Firdousi is more brief on this subject than may be expected. It is probable that he was ignorant of all narratives which were preserved of an event so tragic and so essentially appertaining to the subject of his work. These narratives much more ample than those which he had collected have been put in verse under the title of Bahman-nameh by one of the anonymous poets of the school of Firdousi who during the course of the eleventh century re-united all that which they were able to find of the epic persian traditions unknown to their great master or neglected by him. This entire poem appears to be a most indispensable complement of the Book of Kings.

The history of Bahman terminates according to Firdousi by an episode very briefly narrated but very important for the entire plan of his work, because he indicates the line by which the Sassanians were allied to the family of the Kaianians and how

the royal race of Persia was continued. This continuity from dynasty to dynasty is a point of national vanity of which the persian traditions never lose sight. As to the Sassanians the pretention was probably justifiable; but we see in the present volume that the same supposition has been held good in the case of Alexander and the Parthean kings. In the case of Alexander this is done by means of a fiction borrowed from the alexandrians who had made the conqueror of Egypt a son of Nectasetes, and in the case of the partheans by means of political fables which attributed to Alexander the distribution of his asiatic provinces among the Keanean princes in order to weaken Persia and assure the peace of Greece.

The reign of Homai widow of Bahman barely contains more than the history of the birth and exposure of Darab (Darius Achus), his education and his recognizance by his mother. There is no other epic narrative about Homai which appears to represent the Parysatis of the Greeks in the popular legends. There exist some romances about Darab but they are of later times and do not belong to the period of the veritable epic literature of Persia during which one could indulge himself in reproducing tradition or if one loved it better popular fables oral or written.

With the history of Dara (Darius Codmanus) son of Darab and according to the persian legend, brother of Alexander on the father's side we enter on that part of the book of kings where the author has applied to a foreign source and where the

persian fable has borrowed from the european fable; this loan is only a tardy recovery of its own property. We do not know what the Khodai nameh in which Nosherwan caused the persian traditions such as they were current under the Sassanians to be collected contained about Alexander the Great, but it was probably little because the greek influence very strong under the first parthean kings had weakened and vanished entirely under the Sassanians who worked to establish a state of things prior to the macedonian invasion. It is very likely that little of the memory of the greeks was preserved, and Firdousi had recourse to an arabian translation caused to be made by Caliph Mamoun of one of the fabulous histories of Alexander which existed in greek and some of which have come down to our own times. These histories were in part composed from oriental tales which the greek Soldiers learnt in Persia, which they brought back to their country and of which they naturally made Alexander the hero. What we find about Alexander in the book of kings is the greek fable mixed up with the Persian fable; what the later day romance writers have given us is from the modern fable which has no connection historical or traditional with real facts. If one wishes to know what at last comes of an epic theme let him take up the Iskandar nameh published in Teheran, 1857 and he will see that there remain three or four proper names whose adventures have absolutely no connection with the life and times of this king; again the Arab translator employed by

Mamoun had added to the greek text some history and some fables drawn from mussalman imagination, as for example the visit of Alexander to the Kaaba of Mecca, the prophecy pronounced by the angel Israfil which is only a different reading of the original reading of speaking birds, and the manner in which he made a Christian of Alexander. Firdousi who was singularly ignorant of history and geography has without hesitation followed in this track, and it is thus that some Mussalman legends have found a place in the book of kings which have left their traces there. The simplicity with which Firdousi has allowed himself to be hurried away by an arab translator is a very important element in the critical appreciation of his work and we can guarantee that with this exception he has faithfully preserved the Persian traditions, for we may be sure that if he had deviated from the traditions such as he found them, or had invented them himself he would not have been able to avoid making room for names and narratives drawn from Mussalman history and mythology.

After having related the death of Alexandar, Firdousi immediately approaches the history of the Aschkanides (Parthians) about which he confesses to have found only a few names of kings without any details as to their achievements, and he does not try to fill this great gulf in his book. He has contented himself by giving an account of the fall of this dynasty by the romantic history of Ardeshir Babegan a history which

belongs essentially to the cycle of Sassanian traditions, and he has brought in the singular episode of Hepti-véd and the worm which has all the characteristics of a popular local tale and has no connection with any thing that precedes or follows it. It is not unreasonable to suppose that this tale is a vague remembrance of the introduction of the silk-worm in Persia and of the prosperity which the new industry spread about. In support of this supposition an analogous and equally strange story which dates from our days may well be cited. Some time back, much distress was caused in one of the Departments of Britanny by the introduction of machine-made thread and the difficulty which the hand spinners found in contending against it. The prefect of the department reported on this occasion how the poor female spinners bewailed their misfortunes by relating the story of a spirit called the machine with seven steel fingers which spun much more quickly than they with their five human fingers.

The Sassanian kings whose reigns are contained in this volume are:-Ardaschir Babekan...Artaxerxes. I; Shahpoor son of Ardaschir...Sapor. I; Ormuzd son of Shahpoor...Hormisdas. I; Bahram son of Ormuzd... Varnes. I; Bahram son of Bahram...Varnes. II; Bahram son and grandson of Bahram...Varnes. III; Nersi son of Bahram...Narses. I; Ormuzd son of Nersi ...Hormisdas. II; Shahpoor Dhoul Aktaf...Sapor. II; Ardaschir the good...Artaxerxes. II; Shahpoor son of Shahpoor...Sapor. III; Bahram son of Shahpoor...

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Varnes. IV; Yezdguerd the wicked...Isdegertes. I; Behram Gour (1st part)...Varnes. V. All that portion of the book of kings which treats of the Sassanians has been very much neglected by the European Savants who have occupied themselves with Firdousi. Atkinson in his Shah-nameh and M. de Sehack in his Heldeneagen von Firdousi have entirely excluded the history of the Sassanians, and Goerres has only a very short extract in his Heldenbuch (volume II. p. 400-462). The Persian authors on the contrary have made use of the book of kings as a principal historical source for the epoch of the Sassanians .

The difference of appreciation of the last half of the book between those who seek there for the beauties of epic poetry and those who look in it for a treasure of historic traditions explains itself naturally. The tone of the work changes sensibly ; it is less solemn, the plot is not so well arranged and the style is less correct ; it may be due to age and fatigue of which the poet complains in his work. But this alone is not sufficient to explain the difference so marked between the two parts of the work, a difference which exists and proceeds from the relative proximity of the time towards which the poem of Firdousi had arrived and the nature of the materials which the author had at his disposal. The mysterious grandeur which distance had lent to the heroes of the Kayanean epoch disappears and the poet finds before him kings who had left a name almost familiar and a renown which reposed on a crowd of events

sometimes political, more often domestic, and more appropriate to lyrical than to the solemn strains of epic poetry.

Here as elsewhere the popular imagination has been struck by some celebrated names and has set itself to collect round them all facts that shed lustre and add to their veritable glory that of their less fortunate rivals. One sees the consequence of this in the extreme inequality with which Firdousi describes the several reigns; some are full of anecdotes and others barely furnish a single event; he follows exactly the current and where he has nothing to relate he makes no effort to supply the poverty of materials. He contents himself with filling up a very short chapter with some moral and other reflections on good and bad government. In some reigns he finds abundance of romantic adventures attributed to them by the popular voice and he is pleased to recount them often in a most gracious style. He has even reproduced the ballads as literally as the style and the metre permit, and one can frequently recognise in these episodes traces of the original diction from the repeated use of words and style not to be found in other parts of the book.

It seems that he has preserved in these histories some very exact souvenirs of the manners under the Sassanians. The relative proximity of time had saved from oblivion not only the narratives of their wars with the Romans and the Turks but also some social events such as the rise of new sects,

the political arrangement of their internal administration and the financial measures of some of the kings. These are the portions which give a historical importance to the narrative of Firdousi. These accounts are neither so exact nor so full of details as one may wish them. The materials that are daily gathered from the ancient histories of the arabs and the armineans about the Sassanean period, the pehelwi inscriptions, and the coins of the time, help to render them complete and precise; but the subject is too vast and complicated to enter upon here.

VOL. VI.

This volume embraces the history of Persia during the greater part of the fifth century and almost to the close of the sixth century of our era. It contains the close of the reign of Behram gour, Yezdiguerd (Siphadost), Hormuz, Perouz, Balash, Kobad, Kesra, Nosherwan, Hormazd.

This was the most brilliant epoch of the dynasty of the Sassanides; and when Nosherwan at the beginning of his reign made a tour of the empire he found himself the acknowledged and more or less real master of all the countries between the Euphrates and the mouth of the Indus, between Balkh and Oman. The almost continual warfare which the Persians had to sustain on the one side against the Romans on the Euphrates, and on the other on the Oxus against the Turks and Huns, had been notwithstanding great reverses generally successful and the Chosroes maintained with success their dignity and title of the great king. In reading the Shahnameh one is struck to find that much of the Persian tradition is occupied with the wars against the Turks and the other Turanain nations than with the wars against the Romans to which the Euorpean reader naturally attaches greater importance because the Greek and Latin histories speak of them in detail, while they rarely and vaguely speak of the almost continual struggle which took place on the Eastern frontier of the Empire.

It is, however, probable that these roman wars chiefly occupied the attention of the Persian kings at this epoch and they required their best and most sustained efforts, and not the repression of the more irregular invasions of the Turks. Again the Sassanians chose their residence on the Western frontiers and from that we can conclude that they felt the real danger to be on that side. But it is natural that the popular imagination should be struck with all that passed on the turkish frontier. The war with Rome was a regular war, against a political enemy where each campaign terminated by a battle and by the gain or loss of a fortress or two, while the inroads of the Turks were barren of result, menacing an extended line of territory and keeping alive the hatred between the two races the Iranians and the Turanians, a hatred which notwithstanding the change of religion and dynasty remains alive after the lapse of two or three thousand years as fierce as it was then. The object of these perpetual wars was the maintenance of the Persian rule in the valley of the Oxus and the Jaxartes where there was unfortunately a mixed population which gave an incessant pretext for pretentions of predominance to the one or the other.

This volume begins with the second half of the reign of Behramgour who to the end of his life remains in the epic legends of Persia the type of a merry monarch, fond of all sorts of adventures including the one of representing his own country as an ambassador in foreign lands, a fantasy attributed by legend to a

few Kings. Behram goes in disguise to India, where he courts all kinds of dangers, displays marvellous exploits, espouses the daughter of the king and finishes by flying with her.

On his return to Persia he tries to render his subjects perfectly happy by the abolition of taxes, and when this measure does not succeed he orders out a company of indian jugglers to amuse his people. One can find in this narrative the first trace of the migration of the Bohemeans towards the West.

His son Yezdguerd has not left his mark on the popular legend of the day. His long reign was too peaceful and prosperous to furnish matter for epic traditions.

The four following reigns those of Hormuz, Perouz, Balash and Kobad are exclusively occupied with the wars against the Turks and the Heitatiens (Euthalides, white Seytheans, Huns), wars which brought on great disasters; the death of one king, the captivity of another, and a revolt and mutiny in the palace. These calamities seriously disturbed the institutions of the country and gave rise to movements of which we have no proper information but which have left their mark on some important events. Persia was then the only country known to the ancients which was entirely independent of Rome, and consequently the only refuge of those who had grave reasons to fly from the all powerful empire. During the conti-

nuance of the Parthean and Sassanian dynasties it never ceased to be the refuge of all the persecuted of the Roman Empire. The members of the Christian sects above all, the gnostics and the manicheans sought refuge here to avoid the dangers that threatened them from the emperors on the one hand and the patriarches of Constantinople on the other. Their numbers and those of their proselytes increased considerably and they put the government in danger by the socialestic and communistic doctrines of reformers like Mazdak, who had even made king Kobad a convert to his opinions, and later on by the revolt of the Christians in favour of a son of Nosherwan by a Christian woman. Nosherwan found the empire profoundly agitated and made use of his long and brilliant reign to restore order. He began by reforming the administration and the finances, divided Persia into four large provinces, fixed the duties according to the nature of the produce and determined the privileges and duties of the officers of State. He then made a tour of his empire and eastablished order every where; he made successful wars against the Romans and the Turks and became renowned for his justice in the east. He was evidently a man of parts; he loved to be surrounded by men of talent and knowledge and to hold discussions with them; he had the game of chess introduced from India and sent there the game of 'nard'; it was very likely backgammon, although the description which Firdousi gives of it does not correspond with any variety of the game known today. As to the game of chess our author begins by giving a des-

cription which applies perfectly to the game of chess of eight pieces just as we have it to-day; then he returns to the subject in a long episode where he recounts in detail the fabulous history of the discovery of the game and gives a novel account of it without perceiving that it fits another variety, the game of ten pieces. He had very likely found the history of the introduction of the game in two places independent of each other and according to his excellent habit he has inserted them both one after the other without changing any thing. That which most contributed to the glory of the reign of Nosherwan is the reputation of his vizier Buzerchemcher who in the east is a model of wisdom as Nosherwan himself is of justice; they have surrounded them both with a number of fables and have credited each with a number of stories for qualities for which they were renowned. They have assigned to Buzerchemcher all the traits of wisdom and all the moral reflections they could think of. As to moral reflections the poet had evidently discovered some collection of them and he has given them to us in complete translations or ample extracts. It appears that the original was in pehelwi and the sentences have suffered mutilation either at the hands of copyists or of translators. In the library of Etchmiatsin they have preserved two tracts in Armenian under the title of the wisdom of Nosherwan, and it is very probable that they contain the translations of the pehelwi books which Firdousi had mads use of, if not the very identical ones. It is still more probable that the reflections found in the arab and persian moralists are

the remains of this antique persian wisdom. The observations and the rules they contain appear to us very simple and some times purile but that is a guarantee of their remote origin. They are at once novel and striking and are handed down to future generations surrounded by a halo of glory on account of their antiquity. It is certainly not in a monarchy like that of Persia under Nosherwan seized by the decay of age that their was need for inventing elementary moral reflections.

Under Hormuzd the son and successor of Nosherwan, the empire again began to sink. One can perceive that perfidy was at the bottom of its ruin. He upheld himself against the Khazars and the Turks but had to buy the peace of the Romans by abandoning the conquests made by his father. The rest of his reign was occupied by the struggle against the Turks and the intrigues against his victorious general Behram Zobinih. He was at last dethroned and blinded but without Behram succeeding in securing the throne as he had wished. The discussion of the generals on the legality and right of usrupation and insurrection given at the end of the narrative is a very curious piece indeed.

VOL. VII.

This volume contains the history of the reign of Khoshro Parwiz to the death Yezdizird II with whom the dynasty of the Sassanians and the Political existence of Persia came to an end. It begins with the year 590 and ends with the year 651 A. D. and comprises the reigns of Khoshru Parwiz, Kobad or Schironi, Ardesher son of Schironi, Gubaz or Ferazin; Queen Purandokht, Azamdokht, Farukhzad and Yegdizird.

The long and eventful reign of Chosroes II, his brilliant successes followed by unheard of reverses, his frequent intercourse with the Byzantine court, and his political precautions with regard to his christian and zoroastrian subjects furnish matter for a curious parallel between the national traditions of Iran and the manuscripts of the West. The (roman) emperors Maurice, Phocas and Heraclius I. were known to Firdousi only under one name Kaiser (casar). His patriotism did not permit him to lay stress on the price of the alliance accorded to Khoshru by the emperor Maurice. He appears to ignore the cession of Armenia and Mesapotamia with the two other places of importance Marlyropolis and Daras. He does not distinguish between the two campaigns undertaken by the king of Persia against the usurper Behram, the one in the plains of Araben, the other more decisive near Schiz

However the mention of a locality known under the name of Aderbezan appears to indicate that he places these events in the west of the modern province of Azerbegan. The greek general Narses who contributed so energetically to the restoration of order is not even mentioned in the Shah nameh. This can be explained on the ground of exaggerated notions of national sentiment. Firdousi has described the exploits of Khoshru Parwiz in almost the same language and the same manner as the achievements of the Kayanian and Acheminean heroes. He tells us nothing distinct regarding the victories obtained by the persians over Phocas and Heraclius during the twenty years. The refusal of Khoshru to restore the true cross is the only episode that the poet has preserved out of the history of the Conquest of Syria and the taking of Jerusalem by this prince. The same indecision, the same absence of information is observable as regards the glorious retaliation of Heraclius from the date of the battle of Sarus to the flight of the great king within the walls of Cetisphon. On the other hand the closing events of this exceptionally long reign, the revolt of the nobles under the leadership of Farukhzad and Tokhar, the flight of Khoshru and his fall, all these facts of internal history appear to us more worthy of credit than the narrative of Theophanes and d'Evagrius.

There is another point on which the se two sources of information follow a direction diametrically opposite. According to the greek chroniclers

Khoshru during his sojourn to Constantinople had entirely abjured the religion of Zoroaster. He professed a peculiar veneration for the Virgin and for certain saints of the orthodox calendar. Evagrius goes to the length of giving the text of a thanks giving addressed by the persian king to Saint Serge for his successes in war and the pregnancy of Princess Shirin. This writing of doubtful authority scarcely deserves to be noticed. Unfortunately much greater credit cannot be accorded to the fierce denunciations put into the mouth of Khoshru by Firdousi when he refuses to return the cross to the delegates of Heraclius or when he jeers at the superstition of the christians with an irony worthy of Julien. In the one as well as in the other, one feels the antagonism of race and of religion. For the impartial historian the political character of Khoshru II. is easy of explanation. Bound to the Roman emperors by ties of blood and political considerations, the persian monarch would by a show of regard for christianity wisely reconcile the exigencies of his political situation with the respect due to the religious conscience of his subjects.

The four or five years that rolled away between the death of Khoshru and the accession of the last Sassanian king Yezdizird II. was a period of anarchy and usurpation of which the national traditions have kept no note and on which the greek and armenian historians only throw a little uncertain light. We cannot also lose sight of the fact that the persian poet adds little to our knowledge of the history of the last thirty

years of the persian monarchy derived from foreign sources. In the ephemeral reign of Kobad called by him Shirowi (Siroes) the poet has described the tragic episode of the death of Khoshru and has written a romantic elegy on the death of Shirin. But other facts of less disputable authenticity have not been given a place, such as the disastrous peace concluded between the Byzantine and the Persian, the death of the Sassanian princes massacred by Kobad and the plague which carried off this miserable prince after having depopulated his domains. The tradition that has with or without reason omitted the mention of such important events has been very scrupulous about the order of succession to the throne assigned to each prince and which is the same as that noted by christian chroniclers and mahomedan historians. Among these phantom kings and queens scarcely deserving of mention, there is found a foreign usurper called Schar-barz by the chronicler Bar Hebrœus which appears to be identical with the Guraz of Firdousi. The meaning of a wild boar which the syrian chronicler gives to this name is also preserved in modern persian and is a proof in favour of this identification. It is besides confirmed by the historic fact that the poet is in accord with the foreign historians. The contradictions that are to be found in this narrative and that told by an armenian chronicler are not of sufficient importance to destroy the above conjecture.

No better proof of the absolute dependence

placed by Firdousi on the popular traditions could be found than the touching and stirring but garbled narrative left by him of the conquest of Persia by the Arabs. Two episodes of this mighty invasion arrest the attention, the contest between Rustem the chief of the persian army and the arab general Saad son of Abu Wakas, and the misfortunes of Yezdguerd driven from his country, betrayed by his partisans and assassinated in a mill at the instigation of one of his officers. But side by side with these truly thrilling details there is an omission of many more to the detriment of the national epic. The conquest of Hirah and Mesapotamia which opened the gates of Iran to the arabs, the victory of Pont the only important encounter where the Kawian standard led the persian arms to victory, and the battle of Nahvand which turned the tide in favour of the arabs, all these events are passed over in silence. Finally the battle of Kadessayah which by itself is the subject of an epic poem is summed up in a brief discourse followed by a single combat between the two generals. Even this narrative is as destitute of local colouring as of historical truth. These grave omissions need not be ascribed to the great age and exhaustion of the poet or the disappointment caused by the indifference of Sultan Mahmoud. It is preferable to see therein one more sign of the strong faith and care with which he clung fast to the national traditions, drawing his inspiration from them alone and disdaining all reference to foreign sources.

In finishing this rapid survey of the last lays of the book of kings it is necessary to observe that while the mussalman authors Thabari, Hamdallah, Mustofi and Mirkhond have made this their source of history, it has been neglected by the european Savants who have published fragments of this poem or by those who have made like M. G. Rawlinson a profound study of the ancient history of Persia. No doubt a careful examination of the Shah nameh proves that it is as useful as a history of the last zoroastrian dynasty as it is a narrative of the heroic age of Iran. Even making large allowance for omissions, repetitions and the poet's default of memory, european erudition will easily discover sufficient materials therein for the preparation of a political, social and religious history of Persia during the last four centuries preceding the mussalman conquest. Compared to the arabic manuscripts such as the text of Thabari, the book of conquest of Beladori and the golden clover of Macoudi, and the works of some other writers of the same kind, the narrative of the poet of Tous will furnish the modern critic with a mine as rich as it is unexplored to this day.

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